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FIFTY YEARS OF RYE
1904 - 1954

To Gladys Hill Adams
Best wishes to an old friend
from her ex-librarian
Marcia Dolphin

FIFTY YEARS OF RYE

1904 - 1954

By

MARCIA DALPHIN

THE CITY OF RYE

RYE, NEW YORK

1955

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THE RYE CHRONICLE PRESS
OF
THE RYE CHRONICLE PRESS

THE RYE CHRONICLE PRESS

RYE, NEW YORK

FOREWORD

THE intent of this sketch of fifty years is to show the growth of Rye from 1904, when it became an incorporated village, to 1954, when for more than a decade it had had the status of a city.

It attempts to trace changes and progress in churches and schools, the public library, the hospital and the various organizations for social welfare and youth guidance; it follows the course of the educational and cultural forces exerted by dramatic and musical groups, women's clubs and forums; it touches on recreational facilities; it pays due reverence to the ties of kinship that, happily, evolving over the years, serve to bind us to the country from which Rye's founders came; and it tries to show how Rye responded to the calls that came to her and the responsibilities placed upon her by two great wars occurring in a half century.

A reader looking for statistics, assessment values, fluctuations in tax rates or evaluations of administrative policies will be disappointed, for this is not that kind of a book. Some attempt has been made to show a few of the difficulties that inevitably accompanied the growing up process, and to picture the evolution of a village that has tried to keep its identity—a village which, occupying the geographical position of a suburb of the second largest city in the world, has tried not to be just another suburban village. And in some detail is shown how Rye met the situation when it was found in the late forties that it was losing business because of traffic conditions, and failing to attract new residents both because of lack of recreation facilities and delay in effecting much needed extension of its public works system.

It is hoped that enough has been given about Rye's municipal affairs to show that for fifty years, first as village, then as city, it has had an efficient government; that its presidents and mayors, its trustees and councilmen have

been sincerely devoted to its welfare, men who, with no financial gain, have labored faithfully and long, often at personal sacrifice, to direct their village into ways of progress, to keep it financially sound, and to make Rye a pleasant place in which to live and bring up children.

I have many regrets. One is that I could not include more personalities. Rosy dreams were mine when this sketch was begun that some adequate picture might be given of the many strikingly individual men and women who have lived here over the years. There were a great many "salty" characters here in early days, when Rye was perhaps more New England-like, more *Yankee* than today. Possibly people were not quite so much all-of-a-piece then, cast in the same molds of education and convention. Old timers can tell you stories for hours about people whom they knew who were — well, *characters* is the only word for it.

Another regret is that mention by name of many men and women prominent in the life of Rye has had to be omitted. In general only the names of founders and early officers have been given, and even that has not always been possible. This means that many who have been outstanding in the community go unmentioned. It is through no lack of appreciation that this has happened; it is due to the necessity of keeping within bounds a book which was in the first place conceived as a mere pamphlet.

My task has been lightened by the cooperation of many people interested in seeing addition in any form made to the scanty material on Rye history in print.

From the start the City of Rye has freely placed at my disposal minute books and other records indispensable to the undertaking. Other than that my chief source of material has been found in the files of the *Rye Chronicle*, November 11, 1905 to December 30, 1954, and I wish to thank Mr. Howard Archer, editor of the *Chronicle*, for making available the early issues, and Miss Ruth Harry, librarian of the Rye Free Reading Room, for giving me access to the later volumes as well as to valuable library scrap books and clipping files. For the period of January 1, 1904 to November 10, 1905, before the *Rye Chronicle* was published I am indebted to the Port Chester Public Library and the *Daily Item* office for making files of the Port Chester newspapers available.

I should like to make grateful acknowledgment of the help given me by many individuals: to Mayor Joseph A. Hannan and Comptroller William H. Selzer, to Mr. Frederick P. Clark, Mr. Edward J. Langeloh and Mr. Raymond Murphy, city officials who have been most patient

with a layman's imperfect grasp of government business; to Mr. Daniel E. Kelly to whose wise counsel I owe more than I can say; to Judge Roger Sherman, City Historian, upon whose store of information I have freely drawn; to Mr. Ralph Damiano for an informing tour of the Recreation Commission centers; and to the following for valuable suggestions and advice; Mr. Allison Albee, Mr. Henry Bird, Miss Doris Bird, Miss Elizabeth J. Brown, Miss Alida Carson, Miss Suzanne Gedney, Miss Ruth Goodwin, Mr. G. W. Herron, Miss Marguerite Kenneily, Mrs. W. C. Peet, Rev. Wendell Phillips, Mr. Morton Snyder, Mrs. C. Helme Strater and Rev. S. Carson Wasson.

I am grateful to Mrs. Herbert Black, Mr. R. E. Curry, Col. A. E. MacNicol, Mr. Thomas McVey and Miss Dorothea Wagner for the loan of photographs and to Miss Lauren Ford for permission to reproduce one of her paintings. To Mr. Ira Martin I owe a special debt of gratitude, not only for the many fine photographs lent from his collection, and his reproduction, especially for this book, of the pictures of the old Kirby mill and the Wagner building, but also for the encouragement springing from his contagious enthusiasm for the preservation of Rye history in pictorial form.

It will be noted that in the selection of photographs the emphasis has been placed on those having historical interest rather than on views of present-day streets and houses, although it has been a wrench not to include some of our beautiful churches, schools and other public buildings.

Finally, I do crave the indulgence of readers for any errors in dates or other factual matter that may have crept in to these pages, reminding them only that this has been in a way a pioneering job, with little source material in print other than the newspaper.

M. D.



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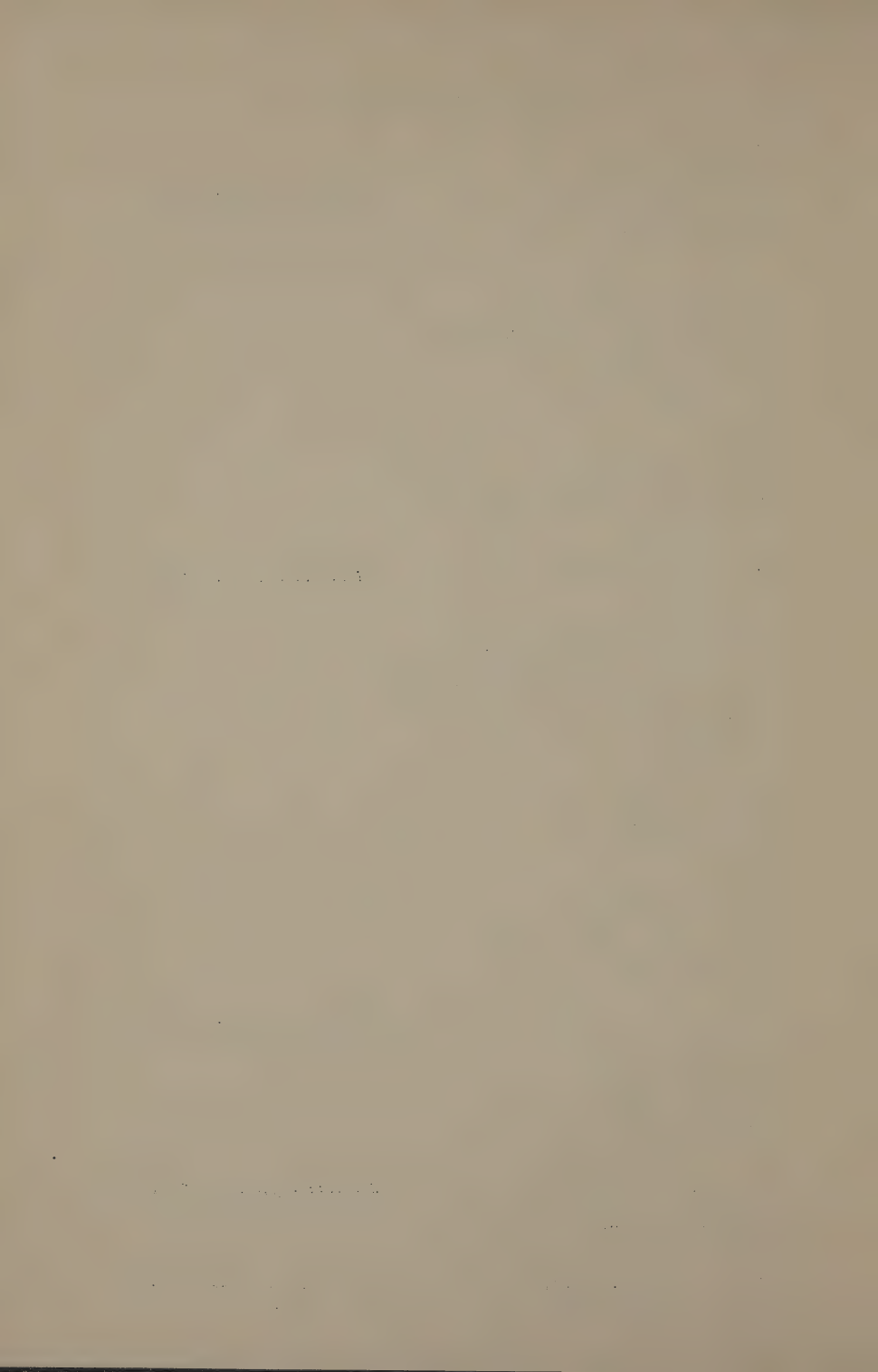
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THE INCORPORATION

“**N**O taxation without representation!” was the rallying cry of the colonists in 1765, and such, in effect, was the sentiment voiced by some sixty taxpayers of the Town of Rye as they met in the firehouse of Rye village on a Saturday afternoon, January 9, 1904.

This meeting was the result of much careful planning on the part of thoughtful citizens who had for many months been working for the incorporation of the village. In November a committee of the Village Improvement Association had investigated the matter and reported that it was impracticable to incorporate at this time, but late in December it was decided to call a meeting to see if a league could be formed to push the matter.

The following paper dated January 2, 1904, was drawn up and signed by sixty-one taxpayers.

“We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves together under the name of the ‘Rye Village Incorporation League,’ for the purpose of promoting and securing the Incorporation of the Village of Rye to consist of not less than two square miles of the territory immediately south of the Village of Port Chester and to secure such changes to the village law as will make such incorporation possible.”

(Signed)

William H. Parsons, Charles Eldredge, John A. Gwynne, Howard Whittemore, Robert Darling, G. W. Galloway, J. M. Wainwright, George L. Henderson, Wilbur F. Hendrix, Reginald P. Sherman, Charles A. Gleason, Fred L. Guerin, Fred J. Selzer, Theodore Fremd, A. M. Harriott, Max Friese, Henry Heil, M. F. Biddulph, Samuel H. Graham, B. F. Gedney, Manuel Sherwin, Arthur W. Corning, Thomas Byrnes, Jr., Leroy E. Ganun, John

FIFTY YEARS OF RYE

A. Budd, Disbrow Budd, Bernard Baruch, Charles P. Cowles, Stephen Field, John A. Billington, Charles F. Wolff, M.D., William N. Edwards, J. M. Sniffen, E. von Gillman, Jacob Werner, Nelson Seymour, Thomas McGee, Norman Warner, Daniel H. Beary, Charles Fremd, Samuel Jenkins, Fred D. Fremd, W. A. Thomas, Charles Fremd, Jr., Harry Billington, Michael Biddulph, Charles H. Walker, F. D. Thomas, Samuel Ellis, W. H. Batten, Robert M. Lyman, A. Outram Sherman, Henry W. Cooper, Michael Miley, William Mathews, John Gerster, Samuel H. Brown, W. D. Dimock, R. F. Mathews, Charles Worden.

The next step was the call to the public meeting on January 9, 1904, which was sent out to practically all the taxpayers in the territory involved. Reginald P. Sherman called the meeting to order and William H. Parsons was elected chairman unanimously.

The tenor of the speeches made by such prominent men of the village as J. Mayhew Wainwright, member of the Assembly, W. H. Parsons, Bernard Baruch and others was in brief as follows:—that the district had no representation on the Town Board and that such a situation might continue indefinitely:—that the government meted out to the town at present was that usually found in farm or agricultural districts and that Rye had ceased to be in that class:—that the Town Board had not the power to give adequate police protection, could not give sewerage or proper fire protection, in short, the government under which the town existed had not the power to give the residents of Rye what was absolutely necessary and what a modern residential community increasing steadily in population, importance and wealth was entitled to.

At only one point in the meeting was there any dissension and that was when the boundaries of the proposed village were described. A map prepared by Engineer Kirby showed two different areas. Both ran north to the Port Chester line, east to the Sound and west to the Harrison line, but of one the southern boundary was Apawamis Avenue and the other Rye Beach Avenue and Rye Beach Road. In both Milton was left out. To quote from Reginald Sherman's own account of this meeting published many years later in a special issue of the *Rye Courier*—"When this condition of affairs was realized the meeting at once became excited. The chairman ruled that no one had any

THE INCORPORATION

voice in the meeting unless he signed the roll of members. A happy thought struck one who asked if there was any reason why the boundary lines could not be changed. The Chair stated he could see no objection to extending them. Those present who had not signed the roll of members at once did so and everything was harmonious".

Thereupon the Rye Incorporation League was formed with W. H. Parsons as President, Charles Eldredge Vice President, Reginald P. Sherman Secretary, and George L. Henderson Treasurer. Together with these officers Fred Fremd, Charles A. Gleason, Samuel H. Graham, J. M. Wainwright and Howard Whittemore formed the Executive Committee. By-laws were adopted and Charles P. Cowles, Charles Eldredge, Bernard Baruch, Howard Whittemore and A. Outram Sherman were appointed as a Law Committee.

Incorporation was on its way — but the way was a long one. There was much detail work to be done by the committees, many meetings to be held, notices to be posted, a census taken,* boundaries established, and, most important, a bill must be drafted and presented at the current session of the Legislature which should not only give permission to incorporate but also amend the village law which at that time did not permit the forming of a village over one square mile in area.

There seems to have been great unanimity of feeling in Rye itself as to incorporation although a few people were apprehensive over the prospect of increased taxes, but some of our neighbors were not convinced. In the local press which at this time included the *Port Chester Journal*, the *Port Chester Enterprise*, the *Port Chester Record* and the *Daily Item* there began to appear news items, editorials and "Letters to the Editor", some in favor of the move, some more or less violently opposed. Most of the opposition came from advocates of town government. In early February the *Journal* speaks of a sentiment growing for Port Chester to be made a city *which should include Rye* and be divided into wards thus ensuring proper representation for Rye. The leading editorial in the *Journal* for February 18 speaks strongly against incorporation, characterizing it as a movement toward seclusion rather than progress, "a movement toward the exclusive". Yet the same issue prints the Rye Village

*3,535 population at incorporation.

Incorporation Act in full and states that it was introduced in the Assembly by Mr. Wainwright on January 29, 1904.

Rye was fortunate in having a friend at court in the person of Mr. Wainwright. On March 1st a telegram was received from him. It read, "The Governor today signed our Village bill." Even the *Journal* which had not been too friendly to the undertaking must have felt a thrill for the telegram made the first page.

Now that the legislation was secured the work went on apace. A finance committee raised nearly a thousand dollars to meet expenses. The proper papers were prepared by the legal committee and presented to the Supervisor who held a hearing on them after due notice had been given as required by law. He rendered a favorable opinion and a call was issued to the taxpayers for a special election to vote on the question of Rye's incorporation. On September 12, 1904, the election being held at Theodore Fremd's market on the corner of Purdy Avenue and Purchase Street, out of three hundred citizens qualified to vote two hundred and two cast their ballots. The vote was 155 in favor, 47 opposed.

Do not think for a moment that because so far no names of citizens other than men have been mentioned that the women of Rye played no part in these proceedings, nor conceive that interest in the matter was confined to Rye and Port Chester. In the *New York Sun* of September 13, 1904, under the heading "Rye is Now a Village" appeared a news item dated September 12 beginning, "Joy reigns tonight in Rye over the birth of a new village government . . . Much interest was aroused by the report that women were to have votes. It was found, however, that the women were not entitled to vote, but that if they owned property their husbands could vote for them. Although no women voted, they took considerable interest in the outcome and many of them drove to the polls with their husbands and urged them to vote for incorporation." There must have been some one on the *Sun* who kept an eye on Rye affairs for a few days previous to that had appeared in the August 30 issue an amusing little skit on the fact that the date of the election had been set originally for September 13 but had been changed to the 12th because people feared that voting on the 13th might bring bad luck to the infant municipality!

Now, at long last, Rye was an incorporated village. Following a Citizen's Caucus for nominations an election was held on October 14th, 1904, at which William H.

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Parsons was chosen as the first President of our village, Charles A. Gleason and William Porter Allen as Trustees, Henry Bird as Treasurer and William H. Graham as Collector of Taxes. According to law the Town Clerk must appoint a Village Clerk. James D. Halsted was appointed to hold office until the Board of Trustees should appoint his successor. The Board chose Reginald P. Sherman who declined and George L. Henderson was then appointed. Robert M. Lyman was made Street Commissioner and A. Outram Sherman Village Counsel. At an early meeting a Board of Health was appointed with R. P. Sherman as President and Henry W. York and D. C. Lowenstine his associates. Dr. Lowenstine declined the appointment as did Dr. C. F. Wolff selected in his place. Eventually B. F. Watkins consented to serve. Later the Board of Health appointed Dr. J. W. Sheehan to be the Health Officer.

At a meeting on December 31st the Rye National Bank was named depository of village funds. Charles P. Cowles was appointed to be Chief of Police, to serve without salary and four policemen were appointed with salaries ranging from fifty to sixty dollars a month. A little later a fifth man was added to the force.

Before going on with some account of the many problems facing this newly formed government let us visualize, if we can, what Rye looked like in 1904, and what life in this "small hamlet", as the papers called it, was like at the turn of the century. It was quite different from today we may be sure, even though the changes wrought in fifty years may not be quite as radical as those chronicled for us by the Rev. Charles W. Baird in his now famous *History of Rye, 1660-1870*. After all, to him fell the unique task of outlining the growth of Rye from a tiny Mohegan Indian settlement on the shore of the Sound to a colonial village with churches, schools, well built houses and a thriving social life. Old inhabitants used to excite our envy by telling us that in the 1890's it was just like a little English village, that ladies with parasols over their heads drove round in their open victorias paying calls, and the automobile was unknown.

II

FIFTY YEARS AGO

IF overnight by some magic a bit of the Post Road and Purchase Street — say from Rectory Street to the railroad bridge — could be changed back to look as it did in 1904, the commuter of 1954 on his way to catch an early train would rub his eyes in astonishment. There would be one thing unchanged, happily, that intriguing little bend in the road that delights the eye as one comes into Rye. Instead of a service station, however, at the Rectory Street corner he would see a quaint, low-lying white house, one of the oldest in the village, and it would be none other than the one-time Strang Inn where, in 1704, Madam Sarah Knight on her horseback journey from Boston to New York spent the miserable night recounted in her *Journal*, and sleeping in her "little Lento Chamber" on a bed whose "tickin'" she suspected was filled with corn husks, found her covering was as scanty as her bed was hard.*

Christ's Church would be seen standing there on its height unchanged, and, in fact, on that side of the street from this point on down to where the police booth now stands, everything would look quite familiar with, first, the undertaking establishment of Solomon Ireland (now William H. Graham's) and next to it that fine old landmark, the Wagner Building, looking very much as it does now except that it then housed Herman Wagner's saddlery store. Instead of the police booth our commuter would now come upon a good, generous watering trough for thirsty horses and perhaps he would see a horse or two waiting outside Cushion's Blacksmith Shop to be shod.

On the opposite side of the street, however, nothing would be the same. Scarcely a vestige remains of a group of

*"The Journal of Madam Knight"; with an introductory note by George Winship. (N. Y. Peter Smith, 1935.)

dwellings that stood between the corner of Orchard Avenue and what is now Library Lane. No gas stations then, no supermarket, no lane leading down to the brook, just three or four houses with fine old trees about them and then the Raymond property and the Square House with its little white picket fence and back of it a garden, a barn and several outbuildings. Diagonally opposite would be the tall, lovely hedge of white lilacs that once surrounded the rectory of the Church of the Resurrection, and, next to the old white house that was the rectory, our traveler would see the church itself facing on Purchase Street, a small frame building which Lauren Ford once put into one of her delightful paintings showing the high steps crowded with children coming out from Mass. Now he would be coming to small markets and shops and he would see a few names familiar to him — Friese, Fremd, Odell, perhaps a few others — but for the most part they would be strange to him. And if he had meant to drop into the bank to get some money he would be distinctly out of luck for instead of the stately edifice at the corner all he would find would be an old white house in its spacious yard. It contained riches, to be sure, but not the kind he sought, for it was the Rye Free Reading Room. As compensation, if he wanted to drop a letter at the Post Office he would find it much more convenient then than now, for right at the next corner, on a building having much the same appearance that it does today, he would see a sign, "Rye, N. Y. Post Office."

We doubt very much that there were any automobiles parked along the way*. Perhaps some early rising grocer at the Hiawatha Company might have his horse and delivery wagon tied out front or Howard Whittemore might have ridden down and left his tall bicycle standing on the path, but no cars, no odor of gasoline about. One thing is sure, our traveler would all this time have been walking on dirt paths and in summer his shoes would have been dusty and in Spring muddy. Still, it might have been a rather pleasant walk, and one some of us would not mind taking.

If the physical aspect of our village was different in 1904, so in at least equal degree, was its economic and social life. We have seen that its government was more or

*Even in 1906 there were only about 30 registered in Rye.

FIFTY YEARS OF RYE

less by remote control, "meted out," as the paper somewhat bitterly remarked, by the Town Board. However, Rye did have an organization important to its welfare called the Village Improvement Association. In 1904 it was in its tenth year and since its anniversary fell on July 4th there was held on that day a celebration which should bring the blush of shame to our cheeks when we think of how Independence Day is observed in Rye today. In a precious scrap book, once the property of A. Outram Sherman and now in possession of his nephew, Judge Roger Sherman, our Village Historian, is a program of the celebration. The day began with a salute of thirteen guns by the Apawamis Battery. At 8 A.M. a parade started from Depot Square in which marched the police, G.A.R. veterans, the Mamaroneck Battalion, Boys Clubs, the Mertz Reed Band, two divisions of Rye school children, a Mamaroneck Fife and Drum Corps, St. Benedict's Home, the Fire Companies and the Apawamis Battery. Arrived at the Oxford Grounds, at the corner of Milton Road and Apawamis Avenue, they embarked on a program of speeches, martial music and patriotic songs. To crown all the speaker of the day was the Hon. Whitelaw Reid, then editor of the *New York Tribune* and due in less than a year to take up his duties as Ambassador to Great Britain.

As President of the Village Improvement Association, under whose auspices the exercises were held, it fell to Mr. Reginald P. Sherman to give the talk on the Association. He stated that during its ten-year existence it had disbursed over \$14,500 and had maintained the police force and fire department and attended to sanitation and laying of sidewalks. If the incorporation should go through, he said, the Association's work would probably be taken over by the village government and it would then be free to carry on the proper tasks of such a body, the ornamentation of the village, tree-planting, etc. He mentioned especially the fire department which had begun to function many years ago with the most modest equipment, a hand engine and a small hosecart housed in a blacksmith's shop, and which now had 150 members (including Milton Point Hose Company) with a modern steamer, a hook and ladder truck, a patrol wagon, and an engine house and its site. From this abridged report of the speech it can be gathered how important a part this Association had played in village affairs.

It is, of course, from the local newspapers that the his-

tory-minded resident gets his picture of life in Rye during these early years, from them and from word-of-mouth reminiscences of older inhabitants. On November 11, 1905, appeared the first issue of the *Rye Chronicle*, a weekly published for the past fifty years without a break. The Port Chester papers had always given space to Rye news, and still do, but now Rye was to have its own paper and one devoted to its interests alone. In the first editorial its intention is announced to be, "to place before the residents . . . a *Chronicle* of the happenings in their immediate neighborhood that their interest, profit or duty makes it advisable they should know. Particular attention will be given to the official acts of the local officers and governing bodies . . . To promote the welfare of this community alone is the object of the *Rye Chronicle*."

From its advertising, its news, editorials and correspondence, with some judicious reading between the lines, one may draw quite a complete picture. Advertisements are often most enlightening. One of the things that early strikes the reader is the number of advertisements of livery stables and horseshoeing establishments. Other advertisers offer hand-made harness, robes, whips, etc., and a man wants a position as "2nd hack and coachman on gentleman's estate." The automobile was still in its infancy, and there was no sign yet of the filling station. Still, two years later a trend may be seen. In October appeared this advertisement, "Wanted. Family horse safe and sound, 15 hands high, not afraid of automobiles." In the very next issue is inserted an advertisement in which Herbert Sherman wishes to sell "a handsome chestnut horse, absolutely sound, 15.1 hands high, having no use for him on account of using an electric automobile." One wonders if the two advertisers got together on this.

The chain store had not yet invaded Rye, apparently, though Port Chester had an A & P. A line on living costs may be had from some of the advertisements — Coffee at 18 cents to 35 cents a pound, butter 27 cents. A lady leaving Rye would like to place good servants in her absence, a cook receiving \$25 per month (no washing) a waitress and chambermaid at \$20. Rather of a change in real estate, too. An advertiser with a New York City address "would like to hear of 8 or 10 room house with acre or more of land for sale, not too far from station, price about 5 or 6,000 dollars." And while on the subject of living costs it may be

of interest to note that a Port Chester paper in April, 1904 quotes a New York City wage scale in the building trades where masons get $56\frac{1}{2}$ cents per hour, bricklayers 65, plumbers $56\frac{1}{4}$, painters 50.

Although there was a fair number of physicians in Rye at this time there seem to have been only two drug stores. The historian's eye was caught by one advertisement sufficiently shocking in the light of modern medical research. It was from a doctor "near Liberty Pole, Boston Post Road, Rye, N. Y." and headed "A Positive Cure — Cancer, Consumption, Rheumatism and all other diseases cured by open air, water and massage treatment. Plenty of room to accommodate all patients." Could such things be? Only fifty years ago? (We note with relief that this advertisement appeared in only two issues.)

On the other hand some news stories reflect the fact that Rye in 1904 had much the same problems as today and reacted to them in much the same way. We read that in December, 1905, what was characterized as "a Unique Meeting" was held at which three hundred of Rye's influential citizens were gathered, the subject being the concern felt over how teenagers spent their leisure time. And then as now Rye people were rushing whole-heartedly to help where need arose, in this instance raising money and collecting clothing for sufferers in the San Francisco earthquake.

With a regularly issued newspaper as a forum all sorts of issues began to be debated, sometimes by the staff of the paper, sometimes by its readers. The growing pains of a newly established municipality are amply reflected in these early years. Rarely did an issue appear in which there were no complaints about streets, water, lighting, sanitation. It is a little hard for us to envision today a Rye with unpaved streets, no sidewalks or crosswalks, few water mains, no sewers, no adequate garbage removal, comparatively little electric light. The lamplighter could be seen making his rounds at dusk to light the gas lamps, an undoubtedly picturesque performance. Yet some streets had no lights at all. And there were labor troubles even then. There was a lamp-lighters' strike in 1907. "Much of the village was in darkness Friday and Saturday night," states a news item. Two years before that Chief Graham of the Fire Department was pleading for electric light in the firehouse because "with the present gas light it was necessary upon arriving at the

building on a night call, to procure a match and light several gas jets feeling the way in the dark around the crowded apparatus." While the Chief was ransacking his pockets for a match and falling over the Hook and Ladder the house, we must suppose, was burning away merrily.

As early as February, 1904, while Rye was still under town government the Board of Health of the Town had before it a communication from a Committee on Sewerage of Rye Village asking for a sewer system which they estimated would cost about \$75,000. In February, 1906, begins a succession of pleas for better sewerage and in March a vote was taken on a proposition for a tax of \$5,000 to be used for investigation of the question. In May we note the formation of a "Citizen's Advisory Committee on Sewerage System in the Village of Rye, to continue until after the village election in June, 1907."

Garbage collection seems to have been a continual problem. A disposal plant was urgently needed, for as late as July, 1906, a complaint is printed to the effect that, while it is collected, there is no official place where it may be dumped. No one *officially* seems to know where it goes but the residents of certain districts are sure that *they* know, for good and sufficient reasons.

The dust from unpaved roads seems to have been a continuing nuisance. Many news items are about the sprinkling system. Rye had three carts but there was much dissatisfaction with their service and in one issue of the *Chronicle* a correspondent signing himself "Rye Poet" bursts into song as follows:—

"How we wonder where thou art,
Long-forgotten sprinkling cart,
Have mercy on our dusty roads
And make puddles for the toads."

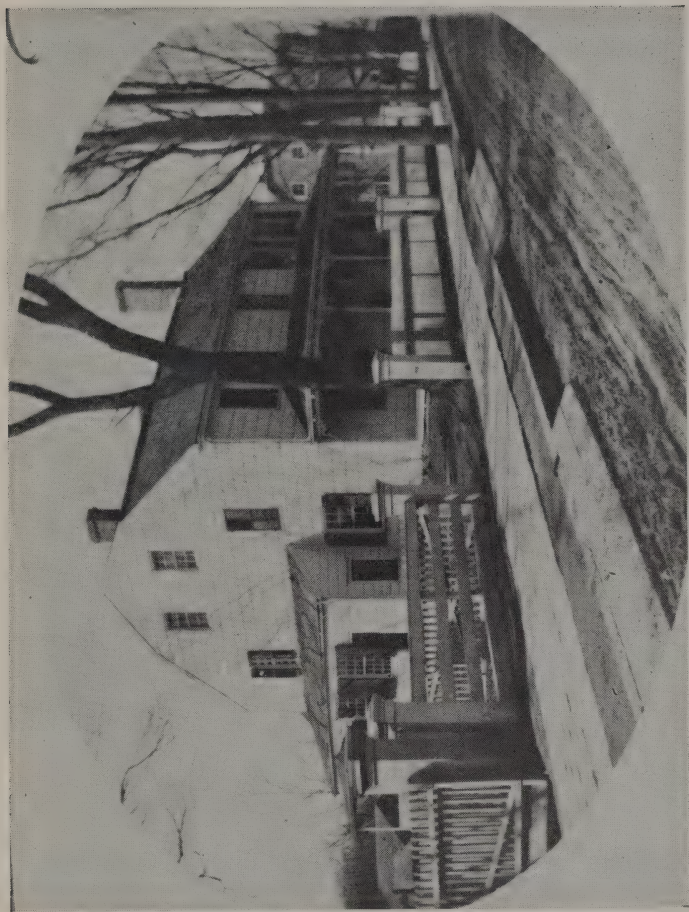
The trolley line comes in for some criticism. Aside from the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, which in 1906 was just changing from steam to electricity from Grand Central to Stamford, public transportation was limited to the New York and Stamford Railway. An editorial complains that while this company received the franchise to lay tracks through Rye streets for practically nothing, they had done little about paving between their tracks as they were supposed to, "and now they want to use Apawamis Avenue!" Service was unsatisfactory and citizens often missed their trains because of faulty schedules.

Even the old cemetery on Milton Road presented a problem, the complaint being that this historic spot mentioned in town records as early at 1753 was coming to be used as a potter's field. It is satisfying to note that later on this matter was properly adjusted.

The little village had a certain amount of trouble with lawbreakers, and crime paid — sometimes — in Rye. A succession of housebreakings and looting are reported, with the wrongdoers not always caught. The Clarence Day residence was looted and shortly after Marselis Parsons' home was entered. In the latter instance the thieves were captured in New York with their loot, and were found to have some of the Day properties as well. In July, 1906, one bold burglar entered house after house the same day. Reference is made in the story about this to "the two policemen who are delegated to guard our entire village," and it appears that at that time the only protection a citizen had was financed by the Village Improvement Association and these two police on bicycles patrolled a route of four miles.

Furred and feathered animals seem to have been a hazard in Rye, as well as that noble animal, Man. The 1900's can not quite match what happened in 1689 when settlers here were obliged to order that "a bounty of fifteen shillings be raised for killing of wolves that lived on the ridge east and north of the village," but we note that in 1905 the paper began to print frequent complaints about the "dog nuisance." It was alleged that stray dogs were allowed to run loose, that they rushed out and frightened horses so that runaways were narrowly averted. Women were known to give up horseback riding because of them. They attacked and severely wounded a valuable cow standing in a barn, garbage pails were nightly overturned and the contents scattered about. Finally the Board of Trustees took action and passed an ordinance establishing a strict licensing system backed up by a public pound. And, to complete the picture, a story appeared on the first page of the *Chronicle* of December 16, 1905, of a fierce gander which, hissing ferociously, rushed out of a yard on Purchase Street and holding a passing woman by the skirt beat her black and blue with its wings. One lived dangerously in those days! Nor was it safe in Harrison. Note the following advertisement. "Lost—a pig on Saturday night. Pig is at large. Anyone knowing his whereabouts will please address Tony Creadore, Harrison."

How familiar it seems to find Rye Beach cropping up

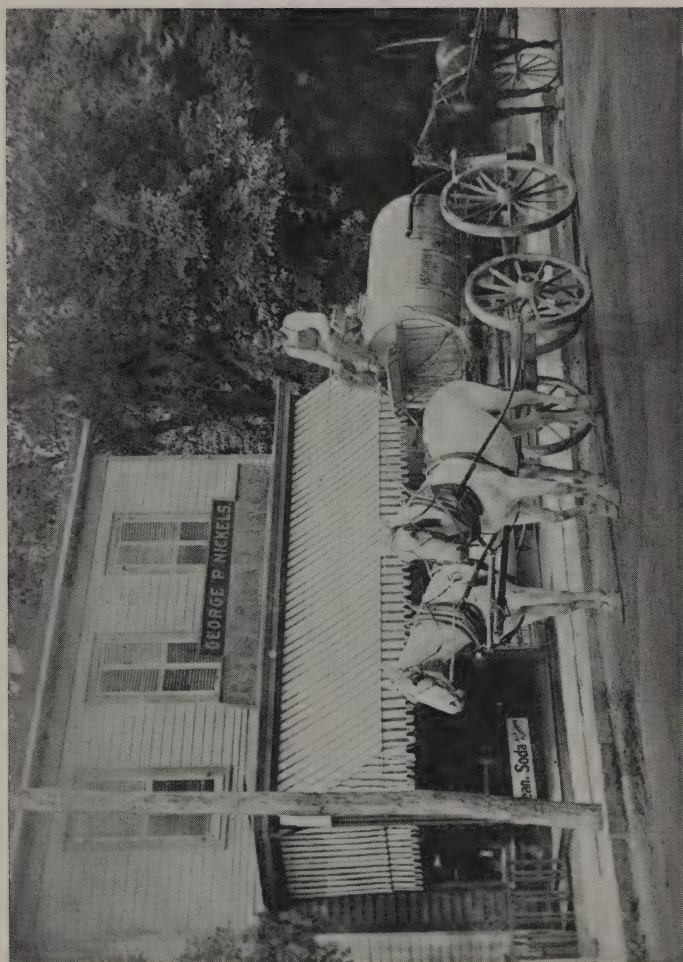


THE SQUARE HOUSE

*Photograph taken about the turn of
the century when it was known
as "Raymond's Place."*



VILLAGE ELECTION OF OCTOBER 14, 1904
Group includes first village officers.



VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION'S
SPRINKLING CART



in the paper week after week, then, as indeed for many years, a bone of contention. The conduct of its amusement features, its licensing, late closing, noise — all the thorns in the flesh of innocent householders planted as thickly as ever. The *Chronicle* appears to have employed advanced psychology and taking the bull by the horns, as it were, finally started a new department in the paper headed NEWS OF THE BEACHES under which they ran news items about people summering at Rye Beach and Oakland and explicitly asked for news of any improvements and complaints about existing conditions. Camps and cottages had names then and soon this column had references to Walk-In Cottage, Camp Washout, The Shingles, Dreamland Cottage, and others of even more fanciful character. Two principal rows of cottages at Oakland Beach were known as Fifth Avenue and Broadway while one on a lower level was called The Bowery!

Yet life in Rye in the early 1900's, as shown in its newspaper, was not all hardship nor were the columns of the Port Chester and Rye press filled entirely with complaints, as the foregoing paragraphs might seem to indicate. Activities in churches, schools, clubs and private homes went on much as they do today though perhaps with a different rhythm. There was sufficient interest in the different organizations in the village to influence the *Chronicle* to begin printing a list of them for people's information. In January, 1906, for the first time appears a column headed Directory of Village Organizations, under which are listed in a pleasing medley the following boards, clubs, etc., with the names of their officers:

- Town Board
- Board of Trustees of the Village
- Board of Education
- Village Improvement Association
- American Yacht Club
- Rye Lawn Tennis Club
- Westchester Military Riding Club
- Rye Free Reading Room
- Woman's Loyal League
- Rye Fife and Drum Corps
- Sons of Temperance
- Foresters of America
- United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America

The names of two other important organizations, the Rye Fire Department and the famous Apawamis Club were omitted but added the following week.

With the exception of the Church of the Resurrection the four churches now existent were on the same sites as today and the Presbyterian Church and Christ's Church were in the same buildings. The Catholic church, as we have said, was on Purchase Street in the heart of the village, and it would be over twenty-five years before its home would be the beautiful stone edifice we see today on the Post Road. The present Methodist Church was not dedicated until 1910. In 1904 on the same site stood a small wooden structure which had been erected in 1872.

Up in West Rye in the heart of the Italian colony (which was still called Dublin because it had originally been settled by the Irish) was a small chapel which enshrined a hand carved statue of St. Donato brought from Italy. John Mainero, who came from a small town near Naples, had made a vow to build this chapel and had erected it in 1892. Every year on the day sacred to the saint, August 7th, a most picturesque celebration was held up and down Maple Avenue. Masses were said in the morning, the saint's statue carried in procession, and the afternoon and evening were given over to feasting, folk dancing, singing, a band concert, and at the end a thrilling display of fireworks. Crowds came in their hundreds from far and near, from Port Chester, walking and bearing candle shrines, from Harrison, from Greenwich, from points as far distant as Pennsylvania and New Jersey. It was a day to look forward to all through the year — and to remember.

At this time there were in Rye village four schools, two public and two private. Union Free School, District No. 3 as it was then called, is the oldest school in Rye, its founding dating back as early as 1711. In 1859 a small wooden structure which some old inhabitants remember was built. It was later expanded by the addition of a wing, and finally reconstructed in 1902 to what became known as the Post Road building. It housed both elementary and High School grades, but for some reason the latter seems to have been a small representation, for the *Port Chester Enterprise* of July 2, 1904, in its account of the Commencement exercises of Rye High School states that there were only two graduates and that it was the first time in several years that any pupils had succeeded in obtaining the 48 points necessary for gradu-

ation. The elementary school must have been large for in 1906 a room had to be rented outside the building for the kindergarten class because of overcrowding. An editorial in the *Chronicle* on September 15, affords a glimpse of the temper of those days in respect to what was seemly. Apparently the choice of a room had met with criticism for the editorial says, "The *Chronicle* voices the sentiments of many when it asserts that it would be better not to have any kindergarten class if it must be conducted within full view of the entrance to two saloons."

The Milton District School had originally been housed in the little frame building that stands on Milton Road near Grace Chapel, with its empty belfry and its gable end to the street. It was probably built in the 1830's or '40's. In the late '90's the central part of the present Milton School was erected, and in the *Chronicle* of February 3, 1906 appears an article, the result of a visit paid to it by a reporter from the paper. He describes it as a modern, two-story brick structure on the south side of Hewlett Street with a staff of three teachers and an attendance of seventy-five pupils. On the main floor were two large and two small class rooms and an office for meetings of the Board of Education. In the basement were a large playroom, cloak rooms and lavatories.

The Rye Seminary when founded in 1869 by Mr. and Mrs. William Life was established as the "first boarding school for young ladies between New Haven and New York," according to its prospectus. For years it enjoyed a unique reputation because of the unusual qualities of its Principal, Susan J. Life. Her active mind, broad vision, understanding of young people and sweetness of nature combined with a deep but tolerant religious sense made her influence felt by everyone with whom she came in contact. By 1904 the Seminary had passed into the possession of the Misses Stowe but Mrs. Life maintained her connection with it for some years. Old photographs show the school as a charming two story and a half building with a wide veranda, standing in spacious grounds and embowered in trees and shrubbery.

The private school for boys, Heathcote Hall, was in 1904 located at Park Avenue and the Post Road. Opened in 1901 it had at first only a small attendance, about eighteen boys, but by its sixth year seventeen boarders and forty day pupils were in attendance and eventually, to secure more

room, it was moved to Harrison where it continued in operation until 1920.

The village library was functioning in the old Purdy house which the Association had bought in 1890. Miss Jennie E. Worden was the librarian. Founded in 1884 as the Rye Free Reading Room it was the outgrowth of a Young Men's Association of Christ's Church and was at first set up as a place of recreation for young men and boys of the village in rooms over the old Post Office then located on Purchase Street and what is now Theodore Fremd Avenue. By 1904 it had a stock of 2600 books and was lending them for home use. Its only support was the dues of members and contributions, but realizing its value to the community interested citizens frequently gave benefit performances to reinforce its slender budget. Lists of books were printed in the paper and no doubt readers were reaching just as eagerly for the best sellers of 1904 — *The Sea Wolf*, *Freckles* and *The Crossing* — as they do today for *The View from Pompey's Head* and *Love is Eternal*.

Rye's bank was the Rye National which was chartered in 1900 and opened in 1901 on the 16th of January with a capital of \$50,000. Its establishment, we are told, was attended with some doubts as to Rye's ability to support a bank. However, by the end of January it had deposits of \$53,246 and in 1906 it was able to announce that it had more than 1,800 depositors.

The American Yacht Club, founded in 1883, and the Apawamis Club in 1890, were two extremely important institutions in the life of Rye and have grown more famous year after year. Their races and regattas, their golf tournaments, their entertainments were fully chronicled every week in the paper. There was also an active tennis club, the Rye Lawn Tennis Club, founded in 1884 with courts on Forest Avenue. The Westchester Military Riding Club, sometimes known as the Rye Rough Riders, had headquarters at a riding academy where Highland Hall now stands. It had both men and women members. Marie Thompson, a well known horsewoman, was the instructor in the academy and many exhibition performances of riding and high jumping were staged there while the horse was still king.

The old Lyceum on the corner of Locust Avenue and Purchase Street was for many years the hall where concerts, plays and other entertainments were held, and while in 1904 many Rye theatre lovers must have gone to New York to

see Ada Rehan in *The Taming of the Shrew* or Richard Mansfield in *Beau Brummell* or even further afield to sample the pleasures of Coney Island's *Dreamland* just then opened, those content with more modest talent might prefer to stay in Rye and drive down or walk over to the Lyceum to see their neighbors in *Miss Topsy Turvey* or *The Deacon's Courtship*.

The columns under "Social Notes" in these early issues of the *Chronicle* show that private entertaining was very general. News of teas and receptions, euchre and whist parties, dinners and balls filled the pages every week and benefits of all sorts and for many causes were continually noted.

All in all it sounds gayer than now, and at the same time, gentler. Life seemed so much more leisurely, more secure. Not that they had more leisure time, actually. Where were those long four-day week ends then? The tempo was different, they did not make such hard work of having a good time. Radios did not go all day long; no television; no jet planes flying over one's head, making one duck, involuntarily; there had not been two frightful wars to inure people to scenes of brutality and violence. People still read Dickens, played hymns, took long walks, thought that automobiles went too fast — unless they owned one. And Rye was so small that everyone knew everybody else. No total strangers on the New Haven platform then!

A picture of Rye at the turn of the century would be incomplete without some mention of the famous people who were living here. Though his home was in Purchase, Rye claimed Whitelaw Reid, journalist and Ambassador to the court of St. James. J. Mayhew Wainwright, indubitably a native son, was Assemblyman for this district at this time, and greatly honored. Simeon Ford, head of the old Grand Union Hotel and well known raconteur, was in demand everywhere as an after-dinner speaker. His wife, Julia Ellsworth Ford, soon became known as author and crusader and their young daughter, Lauren, was in a later day to achieve fame with a type of painting eagerly sought after by connoisseurs. Clarence Day and his family made their summer home here and about thirty years on young Clarence would make his family famous in *Life With Father*. John Kendrick Bangs, author of the amusing *Houseboat on the Styx* spent many years here. The society columns contained

frequent references to the Edmund Nash family, particularly the daughters, but no special mention was made yet, naturally, of the son born here in 1902, young Ogden, who later on was to make the reading public chuckle over the pages of *Happy Days* and *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*. In fact the only mention of him in those early days is one he might prefer to forget, for in the May 17 issue of the *Chronicle* for the year 1913 we read that Mrs. Edmund Nash of the Post Road is at Groton, "visiting her son, Ogden, who is ill with the measles." Philip Marquand was a prominent figure in Rye's yachting circles but it was his son, John, who was to add lustre to the name with his *The Late George Apley* many years later. In *So Little Time* he puts Rye into a nostalgic chapter.

Rye had her scientists too. Henry Bird, when he became our first Village Treasurer had already made a name for himself in the entomological world, and Elsie Clews Parsons, a widely known anthropologist, was author of *The Family* and of many scholarly books on Indian folklore of our South West.

We have no doubt that there were other notables in Rye in these years. This is merely a judicious sampling. He who wishes to seek further might do worse on a rainy afternoon than to peruse the news items under the *Chronicle's* delightful heading of "Personal and Social: A Record of Events in the Social Life of the Village and the Movements of the Folks Who Dwell Among Us."

III

RYE IN ITS TEENS

LOOKING over the minutes of the early meetings of the Village Fathers after the incorporation one wonders if at times they did not wish they had never left the nest—if one may characterize so irreverently an august Town Board. The Rye Board was small, until March, 1905, it was made up of only three people, the President and two Trustees. Meeting as often as four or five times a month these three accomplished a great deal, but for many a month the time of the Board was to be taken up with vexatious problems.

The installation of a sewer system was one of the gravest but there were innumerable other matters to be adjusted: the streets and roads were in bad shape, with little or no paving, sidewalks or crosswalks, muddy in spring and fall, icy in winter, dust-choking in summer as witness the special fund for sprinkling; garbage disposal was a bone of contention; the police force had to be strengthened and reorganized, the fire department also; and the whole matter of finance was a problem in itself, the change over from Town to Village making necessary much consultation and rearrangement. Even the minutiae of setting up municipal housekeeping had to be attended to. This was a start from scratch. Such small necessities as a Village Seal, six "poster boards" on which to place public notices, printed forms, stationery, a book for vital statistics, "a proper minute-book, suitably lettered," a safe, a filing case, all such must be authorized for purchase in regular and time consuming procedure.

Rye had no Village Hall. The first and second meetings of the Trustees were held in Fireman's Hall, the third in the Lyceum, from which one can surmise what a catch-as-catch-can procedure it had been necessary to follow in order to obtain a meeting place. At this third meeting, however, on October 29, 1904, a most important, a most hand-

some gift was offered to the village. In a letter signed by William H. Parsons, John E. Parsons and J. Howard Whittemore the Square House was offered by them for use as a Village Hall.

About two years before this these gentlemen, actuated by a desire to save the historic building*, had purchased the Square House and had it restored at the cost of several thousand dollars. They now offered it as a Village Hall and Museum in memory of their grandfather, Ebenezer Clark, a resident of the village from 1821 to 1847. Certain conditions were imposed. One was that it should forever be known as the Square House. (It was interesting to find in the May 26, 1906, issue of the *Rye Chronicle* an editorial about the temerity of some miscreant who had put a sign on the building reading "Municipal Hall". This was later removed, and it would be a brave man who would miscall this venerable building now!) Another condition had to do with the use of rooms and certain museum features which the donors wished retained.

The third meeting was an eventful one. It was voted that the Board be increased from two to six trustees, that there should be no poll tax and that the Board should levy a special tax of \$22,500 of which \$15,630 should be assigned to Street, Water and Light funds, and \$6,870 to a general fund, including Police, Lock-up, Health, Sprinkling and Contingent expenses. This tax was later reduced to \$17,500 and together with the matter of the increase in trustees, the poll tax and the acceptance of the deed to the Square House passed upon at a special election held on December 15, 1904. It is indicative of the spirit of cooperation that prevailed that at this meeting the President of the Village Improvement Association rose to state informally that the Association would keep the sidewalks clear during the balance of the winter and that owing to a liberal gift from a member it would also be able to maintain the police force until such time as the Village could take it over.

*There have been many articles written giving the history of the Square House and Baird has a chapter on it as well as many references throughout his History. One that particularly took the writer's fancy is a piece reprinted from the "New York Tribune" in the "Port Chester Enterprise" of November 19, 1904, which gives a colorful account of the visits of John Adams and President Washington, in which one can fairly see them coming in the door and visualize Mrs. Tamar Haviland flattered, withal somewhat flustered, by this visitation. Of course, if one wants an almost eyewitness account of Lafayette's visit here in 1824 one has only to ask our Mr. Henry Bird of Milton Point to tell about the time his uncle was patted on the head by that famous hero.

As was said above the installation of the sewerage system was one of the most pressing problems that the young municipality had to meet and if the Trustees had only known how many long months it would be before a real start on it was made they might have been completely discouraged. It was not until May, 1906, when the government had been functioning for a year and a half that a committee was named to present plans for a system, and when in December they brought in their 37-page typewritten report and one thousand copies of it had been ordered printed and distributed there followed months of discussions in meetings and letters to the paper, taking sides in the controversy which raged over the two methods suggested by the engineers.

Naturally many people whose property adjoined the Sound were frankly horrified at the idea of the "out-fall system," sewage screened but not purified, emptying directly into the Sound about 1500 feet from shore. From one citizen came long letters of protest, and an open letter from him addressed to Assemblyman J. Mayhew Wainwright was printed in the *Chronicle* in which he asked him as Rye's representative in Albany to offer a bill penalizing the discharge of sewage into Long Island Sound at *any* point along the shore of the county. To which Mr. Wainwright replied that he would hesitate to apply for such sweeping legislation, pointing out that if it were enacted the public sewers of New Rochelle, Port Chester and other towns would have to be closed! Just as naturally residents in other parts of the village objected violently to the "disposal system," sewerage purified by passing through septic tanks and contact beds and then discharged into Blind Brook.

The sewer question continued to be debated for many months. Meanwhile another matter was receiving fully as much airing, sometimes of an extremely acrimonious nature. Briefly, for it would take pages to go into the details, this controversy was over the establishment of a park at Oakland Beach. Should there be one? And if there were should it be under the Town Board or the Village? It is necessary to mention this here, otherwise one proposition put up to the voters at the election on June 11, 1907, characterized at the time as one of the most important ever held in Rye, would not be understood. Eight propositions were on the ballot, every one of which the Trustees said they were firmly convinced should be approved. They had spent a year in

formulating them and considered these issues to be so important for the future growth of the village that they took the unusual course of calling a public meeting at which they explained each one in detail and invited discussion on them. They asked *to be given the power* to bond the village for \$556,500 and said that this did not mean necessarily that bonds to that amount would be issued since the maximum cost of the sewer was to be \$300,000 and it would probably cost only \$250,000; the road bonds might not reach the amount mentioned and the Park bonds might never be issued, depending upon whether the Town Park bill, then in the Legislature, were passed.

The election was held (20 women voting) and every one of the eight propositions was approved by a substantial majority. The entire roll of officers was re-elected, a vote of confidence in itself, and Rye was assured of the following:— a sewerage system, a new firehouse, improved roads, a public dock, extension of water mains, a new garbage collection system, a Police Justice, and, if the Town Park bill did not go through, the expenditure of \$64,000 for a park at the beach under village control. It was high time that Rye take action on all these issues, the solution of problems which had for so long been retarding its growth, and everyone had begun to realize it.

Fortunately the \$64,000 bond issue did not have to be made. The matter of the park at Oakland Beach so long and bitterly argued was settled by an act of the Legislature on July 23, 1907, and favorably voted upon by the Town Board in November of the same year. Under the provisions of this act the park was to be under the direction of the Town Supervisor, the Presidents of Port Chester and Rye Villages, a Commissioner to be appointed by the Town from the Village of Mamaroneck and a second to be appointed by the Village of Rye. All to serve without pay. The Park was to be maintained by the Town and it was to pay for the policing of it but the policemen were to be appointed by Rye Village.

Scanning through the minutes of the 'Trustees' meetings in the years following the incorporation, 1905 to 1908, we can see what a thorny path was set before the feet of the Village Fathers. Many changes had taken place in the personnel of the government. On February 17, 1905, a great loss was sustained in the death of William H. Parsons, Rye's first President. He had been in office only a few months. To

commemorate his service the marble tablet now on the wall near the entrance to the Square House was set in place not long after his death and the street in front of his home was named in his honor. On March 1 his son, Marselis C. Parsons, was appointed to fill the vacancy until the end of the official year. When the time came for the annual election on March 21, 1905, since Mr. Parsons had stipulated that he serve only for his father's unexpired term, Charles Eldredge was nominated and elected President, while at the same time, in order to increase the number of trustees from two to six as previously voted, there were added to the Board Clarence Sackett, Daniel H. Beary, George D. Barron and James F. Cushion.

Another loss was suffered in a short time. President Eldredge died on January 10, 1906 after a lingering illness. He had been able to attend only a few meetings but it had been hoped that he would regain his health and be able to make to the conduct of village affairs the valuable contribution he was equipped to give, Justus A. B. Cowles was appointed to fill out his term, becoming thus the fourth Village President within less than two years.

President Cowles was to serve without interruption until 1910, and to him and his associates fell the hard task of carrying on many undertakings to which the Village had set its hand, and this, of course, as we note while reading the local paper, in the face of the constant criticism to which American citizens subject their elected officials. At times it seems as though the sharpest barbs are aimed against those who serve without pay, as Rye's Trustees have always done.

It is not possible in a sketch of limited extent to give the names of all citizens who in various capacities served the village in these early years. Their names and records may be traced by those interested, in the village records and in the columns of the *Rye Chronicle* which, week by week, faithfully kept the promise made in its initial issue, that it would fully report on all Board meetings and government matters.

To take the sewerage question as an example of the obstacle race that any actual accomplishment seemed to be in those days, we find the sequence of events to be, roughly, this. In May, 1906, a Committee had been named. In December the first report on the matter had been submitted and it received so much adverse comment that a second and third were submitted. The last found favor and at a meeting

in May, 1907, it was resolved that at the next election a proposition for building and maintaining a system in cost not to exceed \$275,000 should be voted on. Commenting on the need for this to be passed at this time President Cowles said, "In the three years of our incorporation our growth has not been very material. Save for the fact that we govern our own affairs, the village is no better off than three years ago. We cannot increase and grow until we have a sewer system." In June the proposition as we have seen was passed. However, on October 19 we find in the *Chronicle* an editorial complaining that the whole system has been changed and the disposal plant located in another place, "a viaduct in creek mud" bitterly remarks the writer. On November 9 we are told that the engineer is preparing working plans for the sewer and that it is no uncommon thing for him to work all night. On August 8, 1908, the Board ordered a complete review of the engineer's plans to be made by H. de B. Parsons, a consulting engineer and a Rye resident. By this time matters had progressed to a point where easement rights were being taken. In September the engineer submitted detailed plans and specifications and Mr. Parsons brought in a long, detailed report. Bids for construction were authorized to be advertised in the local papers and the *Engineering News*. The drama now reaches a climax and the obstacle-race figure is justified, for when the bids had been opened and the results tabulated the engineer said that they were outrageously high as well as inaccurate in some instances, and recommended that they be one and all rejected! It was voted to re-advertise. Another delay.

Meanwhile the other burning questions, the problems of the Street Commissioner with his roads, of the Board of Health with garbage disposal, the Fire Department with its antiquated building and equipment, the water and lighting systems, the Public Dock and the irritating Town Park matter, — all these were consuming time and energy. There was scarcely a meeting of the Trustees at which petitions from residents were not presented asking for paving, water mains or better lights. It might be Palisade Road, it might be West Purdy Avenue, "devoid of sidewalk, gutter or curb . . . practically impassable on a rainy day, either driving or on foot". As late as November, 1907, an editorial writer says, "We have hardly a sidewalk worthy of the name in the village and crosswalks are unheard of luxuries." In March, 1908, the Village Engineer reported that Forest Avenue,

Grace Church Street and Railroad Avenue were practically the only streets properly macadamized, others from year to year had received only a top-dressing not strong enough to resist the ever increasing traffic. With the advent of the automobile streets which formerly had been able to stand the ordinary wear and tear of the horse and carriage era were wearing out much more rapidly than had been foreseen when they were macadamized in the usual way.

The years between 1908 and our entry into World War I were taken up with the solution of some of the serious problems that confronted the governing bodies of Rye. After not merely months but years of wrangling over the sewer question the Trustees had finally awarded the contract, accepted the completed work, and in December, 1910, notified property owners that they might make connections with it. Not that this trouble was over, for various items of complaint and readjustment continued to appear in the paper for a long time. The next greatest obstacle to Rye's growth, and a serious one, was the condition of the roads and streets, their surface and their lighting. Whenever a disgruntled citizen wished to harry the Board all he needed to do was to mention an experiment in surfacing the Post Road which had turned out disastrously. A time came when it was thought the Post Road would have to be closed in order to protect the village against law suits for damages, and such alarm was felt that Senator Wainwright introduced a bill in the Legislature petitioning that it be made a state road. That was the ultimate solution but not before Rye's prestige as a desirable residential suburb had been badly cracked. "The Post Road from one end of the village to another . . . is the laughing stock as well as the abomination of the whole community outside of Rye" wrote Richard Wainwright in a long, dispassionate but candid letter to the *Chronicle*.

It seems ironical that the main street of the village, Purchase Street, was admittedly the most deplorable of all. There was a shade of excuse for this, since sewer construction had held up repair for a time. Uncertainty as to the action of the trolley company if they obtained a new franchise was also a factor in delay. Finally one of the Trustees burst out in a meeting with the statement that Rye was fifty years behind the times in respect to improving its principal highways and that it should be put up to the voters to decide whether they wanted to spend the thousands of dollars

necessary to remedy the condition.

Two committees of responsible citizens were appointed to make a report on the work to be done and a recommendation. They did so early in April recommending immediate action. On April 25, 1912, a special election was held at which three propositions were put up to the voters. One was to borrow on the village's bonds \$30,000 to pave Purchase Street, another to borrow \$33,000 to improve the Post Road in conjunction with the State Department of Highways, and the third was to borrow \$75,000 to improve eleven other named streets. All three were approved.

By the end of the year Purchase Street was completed and opened to traffic on the morning of December 21, 1912. The tradesmen we are told had been practically isolated for six weeks! To quote the *Chronicle* "For the first time in the history of the village Purchase Street can be used from curb to curb. The highway looks to be from five to ten feet wider and gives the business section an appearance of being alive and up to date." Such an impetus did this give to business that in the next six months ten buildings on the street had been remodeled with new fronts and nearly all of them had sidewalks. Not all, for these had to be built by the property owners, and as usual there were some laggards.

Gradually other streets were improved. It is of interest in this connection to learn that as a direct result of better streets and sidewalks Rye was getting at last carrier service from the Post Office. Although Washington had been petitioned more than once for this, every time a Federal inspector came and looked at our streets he shook his head, went back to Washington and wrote a polite letter saying, "Not yet. You must have sidewalks and street signs and numbered houses." On the first of April, 1914, the householder's mail was for the first time delivered at his door, and in October the Post Office placed letter and package boxes through the village. Parcel post, another boon to the public, had gone into effect the year before on New Year's Day. People must have been waiting on the doorstep to test it for later the proud announcement was made that in the time before closing (10:30 A.M. because of the holiday) *ten* packages were sent out!

There were other things to which by 1917 Rye might point with pride. Rye had now a good fire department and police force, a garbage collection, a Business Men's Association becoming vocal in village matters and a still active

Village Improvement Association. It had also an important women's organization of which nothing so far has been said but which, quietly and unobtrusively, was accomplishing good things for the village especially for its needy families. Founded in 1895 as a benevolent society, its problems poverty, unemployment, tramps (in the '90's these formed a real problem), insanitary jail conditions and youth delinquency, it was originally known as the Woman's Loyal League. In 1907 its name had been changed to the League of Social Service and at its headquarters on Purchase Street it was carrying on classes in manual training, cookery and sewing. A girls' club held meetings there, a Boys' Brigade, and from spring to fall there was a popular kitchen-garden class with small, individual gardens for boys and girls. In cooperation with the Board of Education it was also sponsoring lectures in the public school. As its name changed so did, to a certain extent, its character. It became less of a benevolent society, in the older sense of the word, as poverty and ignorance lessened in Rye, and began gradually to take on its agenda the problems of a changing world.

Important changes had been made in building, both public and private. The old firehouse on Elm Street had long been inadequate. On August 29, 1908, the cornerstone for a new building on Locust Avenue on the site given by Mrs. W. H. Parsons was laid with appropriate ceremonies, and after delays so tedious that President Cowles in exasperation finally said, "Finish in three weeks, or . . ." the construction was completed and the firemen moved in in the spring of 1909. One of the greatest days in the history of the Rye Fire Department we are told was October 25, 1909. The housewarming consisted of a grand parade with bands, an inspection, the official turning over of the building to the department by the Village Board of Trustees, a dinner and in the evening a ball attended by five hundred people. Samuel H. Graham, who was to establish a record for being Fire Chief for ten consecutive years, must have been a proud man.

On a site purchased in 1907 the village had built a new firehouse for the Milton Point Hose Company. This was in use by 1911 and was the scene in July of the next year of a second big housewarming party. A great deal of water was to flow under the bridge before the next step in the Fire Department was made. By 1917, however, all three companies were motorized and the long succession of some-

times rather amusing, at other times rather disturbing, news items about the troubles incident to getting horses to draw apparatus when fires occurred, dropped out of the papers.

The fine police headquarters building that we know to-day was far in the future nevertheless this department was benefited by the change in the firemen's quarters. For years the department had been carrying on in rented quarters in the Bitz building on Purchase Street. The force had grown from four men in 1904 to six in 1909 and William N. Edwards had been appointed as Police Justice. The idea was advanced that the old firehouse might be remodeled and made into a Police Station and, accordingly, in October, 1909, the department moved into what was then described as the finest headquarters of any village in Westchester, with a court room, a private office for the Chief, a recreation room for the patrolmen, a well-equipped lock-up and an office for the Police Justice. (It was in ten years condemned as inadequate and insanitary!)

A fine new Post Office in a building erected by Theodore Fremd on the corner of First Street and Purdy Avenue was opened in 1910 on the first of April. Spacious and convenient, "the interior fittings all in golden oak," such a setting was far removed from the days of the late 1700's when mail came every other day by stage coach and was deposited at Haviland's Inn. When this building had been opened only ten months a news item proudly informs us that some idea of "the vast volume of business" might be gained from the fact that a groove had been worn in the hard wood floor. Forthwith Postmaster Harriott and Proprietor Fremd put their heads together, secured permission from Washington, contracted with a marble and mosaic company and had a white terazzo floor laid between closing time on Saturday and opening time on Monday morning. Which shows that Rye could, on occasion, get things done in quick order, with the right men pushing.

The churches and schools of Rye had made progress. The new building for which the Methodists of Rye had been working for several years, a sturdy stone erection, replacing the frame building which had served them for sixty-five years, was dedicated on May 15, 1910. In 1907 the Church of the Resurrection dedicated its Parochial School, a substantial stone building on the Post Road near the church. The Presbyterian Church had received from George D. Barron in 1908 a handsome gift of wrought-iron doors

for the main entrance. The tympanum, or over door, has, carved in stone, designs which represent the early history of the church and make a connection, as well, with old Rye in England. Christ's Church had done no building with hands, but there had been installed there in 1910 as rector, Richard Townsend Henshaw who for twenty-eight years was a prominent figure not only in clerical circles but in village affairs as well.

Milton Point School in 1908 built an addition at the rear giving it two more classrooms and a basement. Meanwhile the Board of Education in District No. 3 had been having difficulties. Much criticism had been leveled against it in the press over a continuing period. Its expenditures were questioned and the school building came in for criticism on the score of safety. The High School attendance was small and in 1907 and 1908 only two pupils were graduated each year. In the following year, however, there were five graduates and the High School from now on increased in strength, due in part, at least, to the addition of manual training and physical education courses. Pupil accommodation was becoming a problem and various solutions were offered, one the addition of two wings, another the erection of an annex in West Rye and another in Edgeland. The State Education Department entered the controversy and hinted at the withdrawal of state aid if certain conditions were not fulfilled. It was finally decided to build an eight room school on the School Street site then used as a playground. This was ready in 1910. Rooms which had been rented in the new Parochial School were given up and space rented in West Rye and Edgeland to silence the cry of "too far for the children."

Rye now had its first apartment house. Built by John E. Parsons and known variously as the Parsons Building or the Arcade, because of its architecture, it was situated on the lot north of the Square House. The apartments, offices and stores in it were first occupied in 1909.

Misfortune struck the old Apawamis Club building in February, 1907, when it had a disastrous fire, only the forward part of it being saved. There was a heavy snow falling, and a delay in sending in the alarm. And this was one of the times when there was trouble in getting horses to draw the apparatus, all of which combined to let the fire get headway, so that it was nightfall before it was under control. The Board of Governors went into action and by

Thanksgiving Day the cornerstone of a new building was laid and in August, 1908, the Club opened in much more modern quarters than the old clubhouse had afforded. There was general rejoicing over the prompt come-back of the Apawamis because anything that affects this famous old club of Rye affects the city as well. As someone once aptly expressed it in a *Chronicle* article:

"The history of the Apawamis Club is synonymous with the growth and development of the village. Its membership has contributed many leaders to Rye's civic development and the influence that it has had upon the social life of the village has been and still is a compelling factor in our growth as a residential community."*

The Miriam Osborn Memorial Home for elderly gentlewomen, a beautiful and imposing building, was built and in use by the spring of 1908. Eighteen ladies were in residence when it opened. Now, with a much enlarged structure, there are approximately two hundred occupants and a long waiting list.

The Square House, itself, had by 1910 an entirely changed background. As early as 1906 Sara Ely Parsons, widow of the late William H. Parsons, had spoken of her intention to offer land to beautify Rye along the Post Road and Christ's Church section and in August, 1907 the following letter was received by the Board of Trustees. We quote it in full, for Rye owes a great debt to this family, and it is all too easy as the past fades gently away to forget the sources of a village's benefactions.

Mr. Justus A. B. Cowles, President of Rye Village,
My dear Sir:

At this time when so many plans are maturing that ensure the future of Rye, it seems to me important that a village green be secured as near as possible to the most thickly settled part of the village. The land surrounding the Square House is conveniently situated for this purpose. It would be especially attractive thus to secure its ancient setting of greensward, to the old house which recalls the days when Washington and Lafayette and Adams came and went from Rye. I therefore beg to offer to the Village of Rye as a memorial to my husband, Mr. William H. Parsons, the lots

*Books on any phase of Rye's history are few so it is noteworthy that in 1940 when the Apawamis Club celebrated its fiftieth anniversary "Fifty Years of Apawamis" by William H. Conroy was published in honor of the event. Profusely illustrated and written with great warmth of feeling this is far more inclusive than the average club history. It is a contribution to the history of the village as well.

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A, B, C, D, and E, running from Purchase Street to Locust Avenue, as shown on map I enclose herewith, for a village green.

The last summer of Mr. Parsons' life his time was largely given to aiding the incorporation of Rye, and he frequently discussed the pressing need for a new firehouse. When the recent election secured this, I thought it perhaps would not be inappropriate that the first important public building erected by the village should stand upon land given as a memorial to Mr. Parsons, whose activities for fifty years testified to his interest in all that concerned the welfare of Rye. I therefore beg to offer the lot F, on Locust Avenue, running along the green for the new firehouse.

Whenever the time comes that all of the Square House is appropriated for village offices, I shall be glad to remove the kitchen wing, which would not then be useful, and put in the rear a suitable doorway that will secure better light and easy approach to the back rooms, and plant the green in an attractive manner.

Believe me,
Yours very sincerely,
Sara Ely Parsons

Mrs. William H. Parsons
Rye, August 1st, 1907

Mrs. Parsons' generous offer resulted in greatly improved surroundings for the Square House. A retaining wall was built along Blind Brook, a cottage and barn were removed from the property, shrubbery and trees were planted and the appearance of the ancient setting she hoped for was restored. In the center of the village a Village Green was established.

Eventually the Fire House was located on the lot designated in Mrs. Parsons' plan. However, this was not the end of her thought for the village and her desire to establish a lasting memorial for her husband. In a letter dated August 10, 1909, she made a further offer — this time to the Trustees of the Rye Free Reading Room. She offered a seventh lot running along the brook to the rear of the Square House as a site for a library, with the condition that, if within seven years a new, fireproof building were not erected on it, the land should revert to the village. In addition she offered to make provision for a street running down to the library with sufficient land so that the Green should be protected on that side.

So far as the Rye Free Reading Room was concerned the offer could not have come at a better time for while, in its little white cottage on Purchase Street, the library was

making a distinct contribution to community life, it was doing so on the slimmest of budgets, and on one occasion at least, and this was early in January, 1909, the trustees had become so discouraged that they had proposed to the Village to take over their whole plant, land, building, books and all, and maintain the library from then on. There was a difference of opinion on the Village Board as to the wisdom of this, and action was postponed, luckily.

At a meeting of the Library Board on September 30 a formal letter of acceptance was prepared and sent to Mrs. Parsons. It soon became known that George D. Barron, always so generous, had almost immediately offered to give \$10,000 toward the cost of a \$30,000 building if the Trustees could raise the remainder. The library authorities came in for some criticism for being too proud to accept a building from Andrew Carnegie, who at this time was dealing out libraries right and left, but there seems to have been a strong feeling in the community that this library should be all its own, every stick and stone of it, and so, to Rye's credit, it was. Its cost was met entirely by voluntary subscriptions, and the income from the sale of the old property did not enter into the picture at all, being designated exclusively to the maintenance fund for the new building.

Records show that the raising of the fund took some time. Mr. Barron's offer held good, though he was compelled to extend the time limit on it more than once, and other generous pledges were made, but in October, 1910 the *Chronicle* reported that the campaign was lagging, and only \$8,000 of the amount needed to supplement Mr. Barron's gift had now been raised. \$25,000 had now been settled on as the cost of the building. Ground was broken in June, 1912. In June, 1913, the hard working committee was announced to be \$1,683 short of its goal. On August 9th it still needed \$1,159. But now, a break! Mr. and Mrs. Pliny Fisk said they would give furniture and lighting fixtures, and since the Trustees had budgeted \$500 for those items they were now only \$659 short. One rather admires the Trustees for the dogged way they stuck to their guns. Evidently they would not open those doors for business until they had the money. In a lead editorial on September 20, 1913, the *Chronicle* called attention to the fact that the Village might do a little something for its public library, that it had never aided it as it had some other organizations. However, on October 25, 1913, with its cost met the Rye

Free Reading Room held a formal opening reception and tea. Its President, Justus A. B. Cowles introduced as speaker Geoffrey Parsons, Secretary and Treasurer of the Board, who gave a sketch of the library's history, and Mr. Cowles then officially declared it open to the public. Miss Luella Otis Beaman, a graduate of the Pratt Institute Library School, became the first librarian in the new building.

1913 was an important year in Rye. Not only did it see the opening of Rye's public library but also that of the great institution that was to care for the physical welfare of Rye and neighboring towns. The United Hospital, thrown open for inspection on February 22, 1913, had humble beginnings. In 1889 fourteen women in Port Chester formed an organization which they called the Ladies Hospital Association. Two rooms were rented in which they equipped two beds and a meeting room. Soon the necessity for larger quarters became urgent and a house in Peningo Dale was rented at twenty-five dollars a month, where the first floor with four beds was used as the hospital proper, and the nurse and her family had living quarters upstairs. There was no bath tub in the house so a portable one was donated. In 1892 a building fund was started and again the hospital was moved. A piece of property was bought at the corner of Smith and William Streets and the house there remodeled. Here they had electric light in an operating room. Most of the furniture was donated by individuals or shops and an ambulance costing about \$500 was bought with private subscriptions. The Merritt Bottling Works furnished the horse, gratis.

On June 11, 1910, the ten acre property on which the hospital now stands was bought and it was announced that when enough money could be raised the Ladies Hospital Association would build. We are told that women of the three villages, Port Chester, Rye and Harrison, raised almost \$9,000 in a house to house canvass. Joseph Milbank of Greenwich offered to give \$5,000 if nine others would do the same and the offer was immediately taken up. Many Rye residents came forward, among them George D. Barron, Mrs. W. H. Parsons, Mrs. W. G. Nichols and David Cowles. Large gifts were made by other prominent people and during the ensuing years announcements of benefits, charity balls and amateur performances in all ranks of society filled the press. In 1910 the name was changed from Ladies Hospital to United Hospital of Port Chester, Rye

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and Harrison. In January, 1913, the Macy Home for Nurses was erected, the gift of Mrs. Kingsland, Mrs. Ladd and V. Everett Macy in memory of William H. Macy, Jr.

As always the women of Rye rushed forward to help. In 1911 while the hospital was still in process of construction Mrs. H. V. W. Wickes founded the now famous organization called the "Twigs," groups of women who met in the homes of members to sew for the hospital. By 1917 there were ten in operation (there are thirty-one now). The volume of work accomplished and the amount of money which they have raised by their annual fair and in other ways staggers the imagination. They are truly indispensable to the United Hospital.

By many the whole idea of this great new hospital was thought fantastic and many heads were shaken and prophecies of disaster made. If anyone had thought it was not needed they must have changed their minds. In its first year 391 patients were treated. In 1916 the number was 1,035, and the directors were begging for more support.

In Rye nothing spectacular was occurring in population growth as yet. At its incorporation it had a population of 3,535. In 1910 it had increased only to 3,964. Yet it was surely, if slowly, beginning to grow for by the next Federal census it was slightly over 5,000. It is only logical that after the improvements in roads, sanitation, lighting and water systems and in police and fire protection it should have begun to attract new residents.

Rye was starting to change from the quiet little New England village that it had remained so long. Real estate was moving. The Apawamis Land Company was opening up a section near the Apawamis club and several other companies were buying up properties. New homes were being built, often for old residents on new sites. We are told that more than five million dollars worth of property was sold in the vicinity of Rye in 1915. A story in the *Chronicle* late in 1916 stated that the localities of Rye, Port Chester and Greenwich eclipsed all other sections of suburban New York in amount and size of sales during the year, the cause being the natural beauties of the territory, improved roads and train service and the popularity of the country clubs.

Certainly Rye's two famous, long-established clubs were powerful drawing cards and both were growing rapidly. At the Apawamis the members had just celebrated an anni-

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versary, cutting a cake with twenty-five candles which it took four strong men to bear in to the table. The famous "Seniors" founded by Horace L. Hotchkiss at the Apawamis in 1905 had formed twelve years later a permanent Association. The American Yacht Club started by steam-yacht enthusiasts had now turned with equal fervor to sail. And now a new club came into being. In 1911 a syndicate was formed to buy on Manursing Island sixty-five acres which had been in the Cornell family for a hundred years. Here in June, 1912, the Manursing Island Club opened welcoming doors, with Marselis Parsons, H. F. G. Wey, Cornelius V. Sewell and Waldron Williams its first officers. The Rye Lawn Tennis Club, one of the oldest in the village was still in existence and for those who preferred horse flesh to gasoline there was the Riding Club, still holding classes in riding and jumping and putting on horse shows in which local riders gave exhibitions of good horsemanship. The "outdoor type," then as now, was certainly well taken care of.

There was opportunity for other forms of recreation as well. Obviously there were Oakland and Rye Beach, the latter a miniature Coney Island. And at the two firehouses the men of the three companies, while not neglectful of their reason for existence, maintained activities that had all the features of a good club. News of bowling matches, dances, benefits, clambakes and other festivities were reported in the papers weekly. The Rye Garden Club began to make its appearance in the news with bulb shows and other activities. Organizations for young men and boys began to be more closely knit. A branch of the YMCA had been formed and led rather a precarious existence until the spring of 1916 when a new and vigorous personality brought from outside Rye came to act as Secretary. Such was the enthusiasm and energy put into his work by Albert Chesley that by the end of the year the "Y" had a membership of over two hundred. It conducted Sunday afternoon services, it had a baseball team, it sponsored the Memorial Day program on the Village Green and sports events on the Fourth of July and finally, abandoning its small rooms over a drug store on Purchase Street, rented the former library quarters in the old Purdy house. The place was absolutely unfurnished, but an appeal in the papers brought in tables, chairs, rugs, pictures, games and books and another joyful housewarming took place on December 2, 1916.

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The "Y" occupied the first and second floors but the third floor was given over to the Boy Scouts, an organization which in recent years had begun its activities in Rye.

During the winter months a series of free lectures was given financed by the League of Social Service and the Board of Education. Among well known names we come on those of George W. Cable, Newell Dwight Hillis, Frank Chapman, Jacob Riis and Dr. Grenfell. Private homes had musicales and there is frequent mention in the news of special musical services at the churches. And as always there were many benefits in which local people took part with great gusto, for instance a "Society Circus" for the League of Social Service, which included among other acts a slack wire performance by George Hughes, head caddy at the Apawamis, Mrs. Horace Connor with her "performing lions," a high jumping event by the director of the Rye Riding Club and, as a crowning touch, the Attack on the Deadwood Coach.

One forgets at times that women did not always have the vote. Looking through a file of the old numbers of the *Chronicle* reminds us of the fact. Around 1910 the word "suffrage" begins to appear, and at first there are only occasional references to what was considered the outlandish conduct of those erratic creatures in London. An item on the editorial page finds cause for congratulation in the assurance that "when suffrage comes over here our women can be trusted to be more ladylike." Early in 1911 a branch of the Equal Franchise League embracing the whole town of Rye was formed here with Mrs. J. Bishop Putnam as President, and the editor commenting on it says somewhat smugly, "Frankly, this paper has not taken the movement seriously as yet . . ." He little knew.

Yes, there was ample outlet for the energies of women now. Soon there would be more, for we who are wise-after-the-event know that a shadow was about to fall over America as it had over Europe. Not that Rye women waited until April 6, 1917, to work for the Red Cross. In the year that war was declared in Europe Rye sent over there more than twenty-five thousand hospital supplies and garments. An annual report of the Rye Free Reading Room, where the Red Cross had its first workroom, proudly states that

the very first base-hospital unit shipped to France from Westchester County was packed in the library.

As soon as America entered the war activity was redoubled. According to Chauncey Ives, in his *World War History of the Village of Rye, 1917-1918*, published in 1923 by the Knickerbocker Press, the first patriotic meeting in the village was held by the Rye Garden Club on April 12, less than a week after war was declared. From then on Rye women backed up the war effort without stint—in war-garden work, in Navy League work, in Liberty Loan and other drives and above all in the Red Cross. At first the workers met in the Rye Free Reading Room but as the work increased and they needed more space President Fremd placed the Square House at their disposal. Some of the women almost lived there and the volume of work sent out was tremendous.

Meanwhile the men were enlisting or answering the call of the draft boards. Older men were forming a Home Defense League. Others were going abroad as YMCA workers. The YMCA of Rye released its secretary, Albert Chesley, for war work and the Board of Education of the Rye School sent their principal, George E. Webster, continuing his salary meanwhile. Christ's Church sent its rector, the Rev. R. T. Henshaw, paying his salary and procuring a substitute to serve while he was acting as Red Cross chaplain in military hospitals. All the clubs and churches and schools joined in the common cause. To quote from Mr. Ives' history (which anyone looking for a detailed account of Rye's part during the war years should not fail to consult):—

"In supporting the National Government with subscriptions to Liberty and Victory Loans the village far exceeded its allotted quotas of every loan, and averaged 240 per cent on all five loans, the Third reaching 330 per cent. For Red Cross work, YMCA, Knights of Columbus, Salvation Army, War Savings Stamps and the United War Work Campaign, all its subscriptions were also far 'over the top' of their respective quotas. With a population of a little over five thousand it furnished for military service at home and abroad, nearly three hundred men of which eight were wounded, seven gave the supreme sacrifice of their lives and thirteen were decorated for distinguished service or meritorious conduct."

The month of January, 1918 was one in which Rye's

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citizens experienced some of the hardships of war. A genuine cold wave came the first week when a temperature of seventeen below zero was recorded in the heart of the village, the lowest ever up to that time. Every available plumber spent New Year's Day going from house to house where pipes had frozen. The drop in the mercury happened to coincide with a coal shortage. Theodore Fremd was made Food Distributor for Rye by the County Fuel Administration and apportioned the scanty supply as seemed best, at the same time tightening up on services wherever possible. The Library was closed for two weeks; the High School building closed and the pupils moved into the grade school; through the kindness of the Resurrection School the kindergarten was housed there for a time; the churches closed except for one service on Sunday and a little later it was announced that the three Protestant congregations would hold union services for three months; the Westchester Lighting Company shut off all gas lamps for a while and Rye Beach Avenue which happened to have electric lamps was said to be brighter than poor little gas-lighted Purchase Street; entertainments in the assembly rooms of the firehouse and the schools were banned temporarily. Most people cooperated nobly and except for some anxious times in cases of illness probably felt a certain sense of satisfaction in doing their bit without complaint. After all it was only inconvenience, not suffering.

The war did not cease for Rye with the signing of the armistice in November, 1918. There was still work to do for the returning soldiers and for those left in camps abroad. Among activities that should be mentioned is the good work done by the Victory Boys and Girls, Rye's school children, who raised over a thousand dollars of money saved or earned by them for the United War Work Fund. Then came the Victory Loan of 1919. Again Rye oversubscribed. Nor should the Women's Motor Corps be forgotten whose members earned badges for service ranging from 800 to 1600 hours.

September 18, 1919 was the climactic day — the Welcome Home Day called "the greatest celebration in the history of Rye." Commuters stayed home from their work in the city that day. All business was suspended at noon. Rye's soldiers, sailors and marines numbering over two hundred marched through the streets accompanied by all our civic, firemanic and fraternal organizations, the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, the children from every school. Every building

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floated the colors. At the base of the Liberty Pole was the Honor Roll.* The marchers grouped around it and Village President Fremd made the welcome-home address and solemnly dedicated it. Decorations were awarded and plaques presented to the relatives of men who had lost their lives in the service. Colonel Wainwright responded for the men. That night the service men were guests of the Village at a dinner at Rye Beach attended by several hundred of the townspeople. Rye's Colonel William Rand who was Judge Advocate for the American Expeditionary Force made the address of the evening and the day ended with a huge block party and dancing in the street in front of the Firehouse. Some of us can remember the great wave of emotion that swept over every little village and town in America on those days when their own were welcomed back, and well know that nothing was too good for the service men of Rye on that September day.

Before we go on to the decade of the Twenties it is important to note some of the numerous shifts that had been occurring in the personnel of the government in the years immediately preceding the war. During the latter years of Mr. Cowles' term of office there had been some dissatisfaction with the conduct of village affairs and in 1909 a Citizen's Protective Party was formed which ran a ticket in opposition to the Citizen's Independent Party which had had control for a long time. They were defeated but in 1910 tried again and this time elected their candidate, Solomon Ireland, as President. At the end of his term he declined to run again and the old Citizen's Independent elected Clarence Sackett President. Mr. Sackett served until 1913 and was succeeded by Theodore Fremd who had been a Trustee since 1909, and now settled down in the President's chair for thirteen long years, leaving it then only after several futile attempts to escape.

*What Colonel Wainwright in his moving speech at the rededication of the War Memorial alluded to as "the last act of the drama of our village in the late war" took place on September 26, 1926. The name-bearing plaques placed at the base of the Liberty Pole in 1919, had deteriorated and had to be replaced. At this ceremony the British, French and Italian Consulates were represented and the four national anthems were sung. The Village Trustees, the American Legion Post, war veterans, Boy Scouts and a large gathering of citizens were present and President Morehead and former President Fremd took part.

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No name is more prominent in our village history than that of Mr. Fremd. He is practically a legend. Born in Germany, he came to this country in 1880 as a boy of seventeen and when he went back three years later to settle his parents' estate he was forced to serve three years in the German army before he could collect his legacy and return. "After I was discharged," he said once, in the course of a speech, "I couldn't get out of there fast enough," and then he added simply, "I do love this country." Change that last word to *Rye* and it epitomizes the matter. Theodore Fremd loved Rye and he served it loyally for more than fifty years — as business man, as Village Trustee, as President, as head of the Board of Education and in many other capacities. He well deserved the title given him in affection — "Grand Old Man of Rye" — and when, in 1941, the Civic Committee of the Woman's Club asked the City to have Railroad Avenue upon which he had lived for many years renamed Theodore Fremd Avenue there was not a dissenting voice and the idea was adopted with enthusiasm.

IV

THE TWENTIES

THE decade of the Twenties in Rye was one of rapid growth for the Automobile Age was upon us. In 1915 there were less than two and a half million cars registered in the United States. In 1925 there were nearly twenty million! Cars had been improved beyond belief. They had self-starters; they were closed and hence lockable and storm-proof, capable of being parked out of doors twenty-four hours if need be. Best of all Henry Ford had driven down prices. This, combined with good roads and scenic parkways (and Westchester with its Bronx River Parkway, completed in 1925, was in the van) drew to the suburbs people who had hitherto been content to live in the city. Rye had new roads and with its country clubs and beaches was a shining mark for this exodus to the country. Dozens of New York firms opened real estate offices here and houses mushroomed all over the village. Real estate dealers bought up good sized tracts of land and then subdivided them and the Rye paper began to have enticing pictures of new houses in these developments. To cite one example, consider Ryegate. In seven years it was converted from actual farm land into a colony of sixty attractive homes.

And now the apartment house invaded Rye in earnest, securing homes for many middle income people unable to afford the upkeep of a house, but constituting a new type of headache for the Village Fathers as they began to try to cope with zoning problems. Up to now there had been only the Parsons Building. In January, 1926, came the huge Blind Brook Lodge, reputed to cost over a million. Highland Hall followed almost immediately. In the spring of 1927 Manursing Lodge was ready for tenants.

Early in 1919 it was announced with considerable fanfare that a hotel syndicate headed by John M. Bowman had

bought six hundred acres of the Hobart Park estate for an immense country club to cost \$300,000,000. An era of prosperity was predicted, millions of dollars would be spent in Rye, property values enhanced. The Westchester Biltmore Club was thrown open in May, 1922, and soon became a favorite resort of wealthy New York golf and tennis enthusiasts.

Three other clubs came into existence now: in 1921 the Park property on the Post Road was bought for a golf club and the castle-like edifice on it was converted into the Rye Country Club; the Milton Point Casino (now the Shenorock Club) opened on July 4th, 1924, advertised for many months as being as near like the Lido in Venice, cabanas and all, as America could manage. Three years later the Peningo Club (now the Coveleigh) opened on the Fisk and Wainwright property on Milton Point.

And now! On Memorial Day in 1928 "Playland" in all its glory appears upon the map at last, and years of complaints, threatened law suits, public meetings at which agitated citizens from the beach section appeared with their grievances, and storms beat about the heads of the defenseless Trustees — all this became a thing of the past. The county took over. The Westchester County Park Commission had bought the south end of Manursing Island, Rye Beach Amusement Park and Paradise Park, and tearing down the old shacks and hot-dog stands and superannuated roller coasters, (a task in which they had partial assistance when a spectacular fire destroyed most of Paradise Park in 1926) proceeded to create a good looking, well-kept, well-policed pleasure park. All this and Heaven too, one might almost say, for with this went a solution of the vexed sewer problem. It was of course, unthinkable that a disposal plant should stand out for all to see, practically in the center of this new park. To rid themselves of it and to further their plan for a new system the directors of the Park Commission paid the Village of Rye \$150,000 for the land on which the disposal plant was located and the Sewer District paid \$240,000 for the trunk and sewer mains. We became joined with the County in the Blind Brook Valley Sewer System and the old disposal plant was removed to the village property where the incinerator already stood. So ended a long chapter in Rye's sanitation history.

While all these activities were going on institutions and movements in Rye which had already been established were

by no means standing still. Banks, churches, schools, civic services were strengthening their forces.

On July 18, 1923, the Rye National Bank moved from the inadequate quarters where twenty years earlier it had opened up in one of Rye's smallest stores and started business in the modern building which it had built on its present site. A few days later Rye had two banks, for the newly organized Rye Trust Company had purchased a building on the opposite corner, opening there on July 24.

Christ's Church now (1924) erected a fine large parish house adjacent to the church and within a few months the Presbyterian Church dedicated its new church house. With enlarged facilities both congregations became increasingly active. The Rye Methodists blithely burned their mortgage papers one Thanksgiving Day (1920) and in 1923 became public benefactors by enlarging their large basement and making it into a room where men and boys might bowl and play basketball. Rye at this time was singularly lacking in facilities of this kind and while the Boy Scouts had priority rights here, because they and their leaders had been active in helping in this conversion, other groups were made welcome there also, and, in fact, nearly swamped the church with requests.

In West Rye a sad thing had happened. Two days after the feast day of St. Donato was observed in the celebration centering around the little chapel on Maple Avenue, a fire broke out there. The hand carved statue of the saint that had been brought with such loving care from Italy was consumed and the chapel burned to the ground. John Mainero died very soon after this — they tell you up there quite simply, "he lost the will to live." This was in August, 1925. By the time that the saint's day came again a little chapel built of West Rye's own fieldstone had been partially completed, with gifts toward its construction coming from far and near. The celebration of the day goes on every year, maintained by Mr. Mainero's daughter, Mrs. Leonard Riccio.

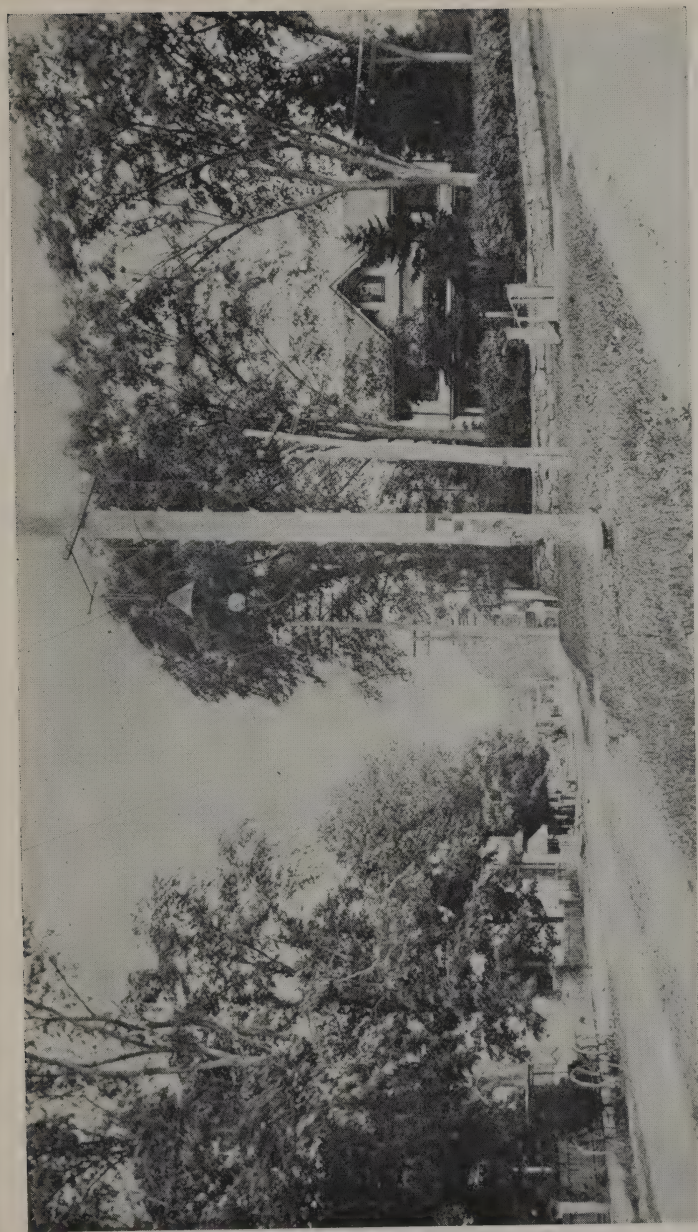
Meanwhile great things were happening in the parish of the Church of the Resurrection. Some time in 1924 the little wooden building was moved from Purchase Street to a position facing on Smith Street. It was planned to erect a new rectory there and to build on the site where the existing one stood a church facing the triangle formed by the Post Road and Purchase Street. As time went on this plan was given up, for the site was in the heart of the business

section and there would be little or no room for expansion. With large vision and considerable courage Father Goggin in 1926 purchased the plot on which the old Kirkclawn Inn stood, and almost immediately began to build a large parochial school, a rectory and a convent, all of which were ready for occupancy by the fall of 1928.

In Rye schools the decade had seen many changes. The old Rye Seminary had passed out of existence as a girls' boarding school. In 1917 it had been bought by a group of Rye parents and had become a day school with a governing board of trustees. In the fall of 1920 it was merged with the Rye Country School for boys, formerly in Harrison, and its curriculum was changed, carrying girls as before through the twelfth grade and boys through the eighth. It now became the Rye Country Day Schools. So fast did the school grow in this new set-up that a larger building was needed. A strong finance committee was formed and an intensive campaign started throughout the whole community, with its goal \$200,000. On the first day of October, 1924, the school opened in the fine new building that it now occupies.

With the mushroom growth in population in the Milton Point section came a consequent shrinkage in room at the Milton School, the statement being made in 1920 that the attendance had increased fifty per cent in two years. In 1926 the district voted to spend \$60,000 for an addition and a further sum to buy adjacent property for a playground. Milton was always a progressive school and in 1925 it had instituted that feature soon to become popular in all schools, a "Father and Son" dinner. This was followed three years later by a "Mother and Daughter" dinner. They are so regular a part of school life now that we forget that they were once novel occasions.

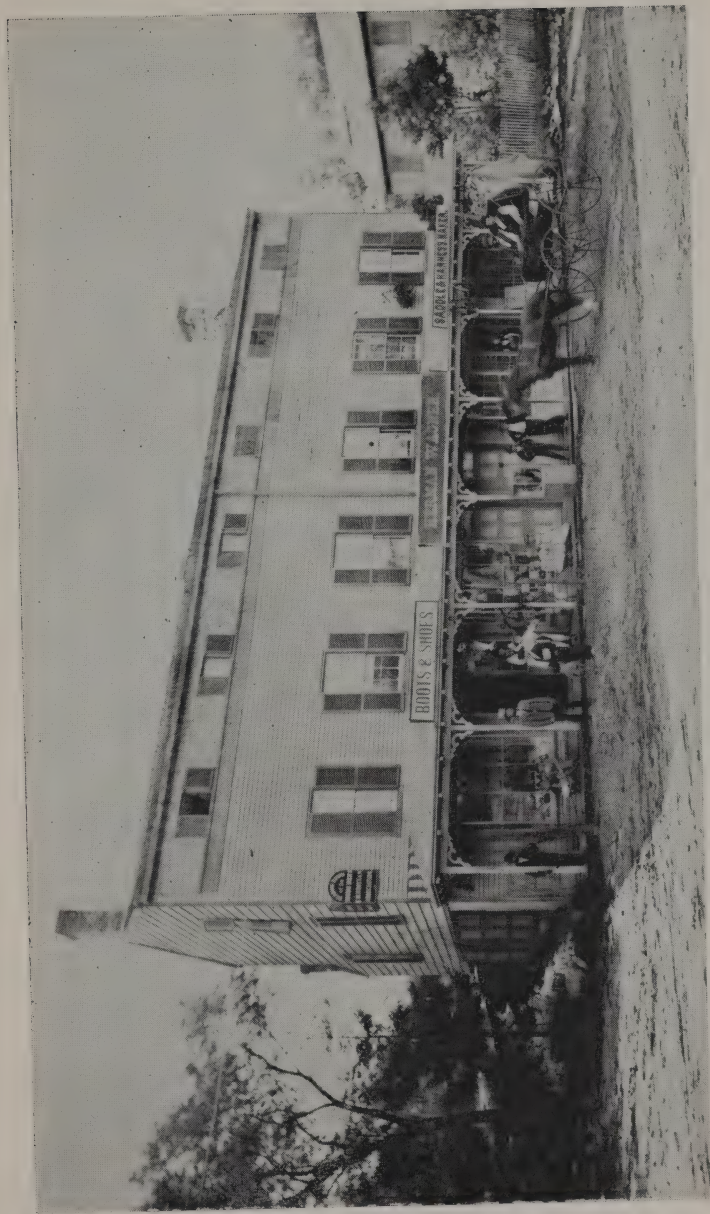
It should be remembered that we are now in the years when parents, as a class, were becoming more vocal. The Parent Teachers Associations were starting. The first mention that we find of them in the *Chronicle* is a news item of May, 1920, which speaks of a district conference of the New York Parent Teachers Association being held in Port Chester. It is characterized as "a growing movement". The Rye Country Day Schools formed a P.T.A. in 1921, Milton in 1922 and Rye School in 1927. In the following year a parents' association known as the St. Monica Mothers' Club was organized at the Resurrection School. All this made for a closer fellowship between home and school and there



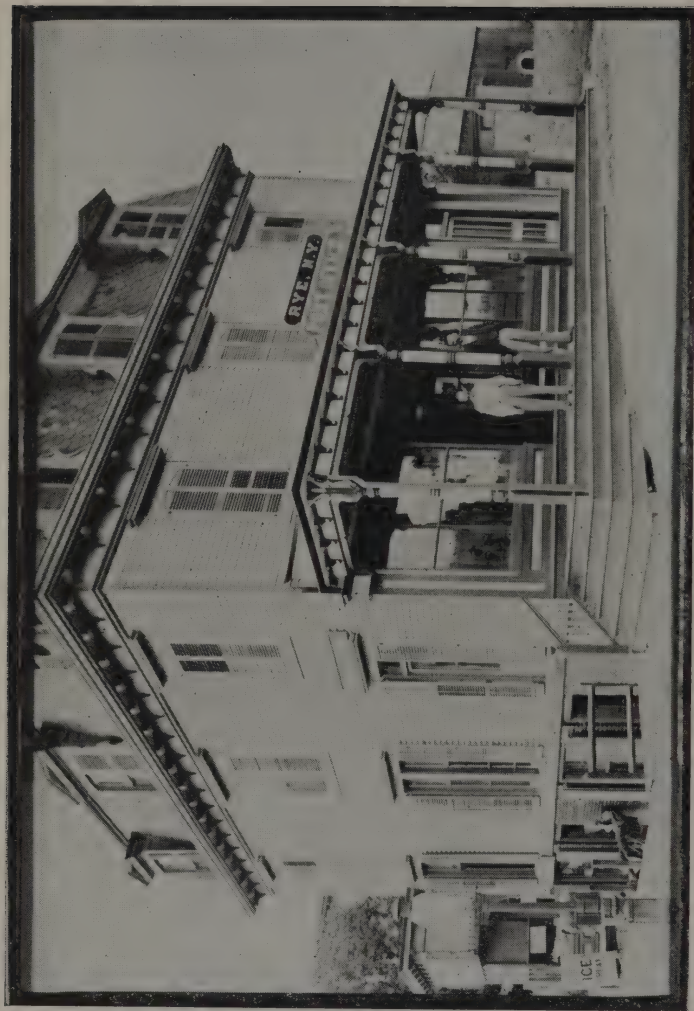
PURCHASE STREET IN 1894
*Square House on left,
Resurrection Rectory
at right.*



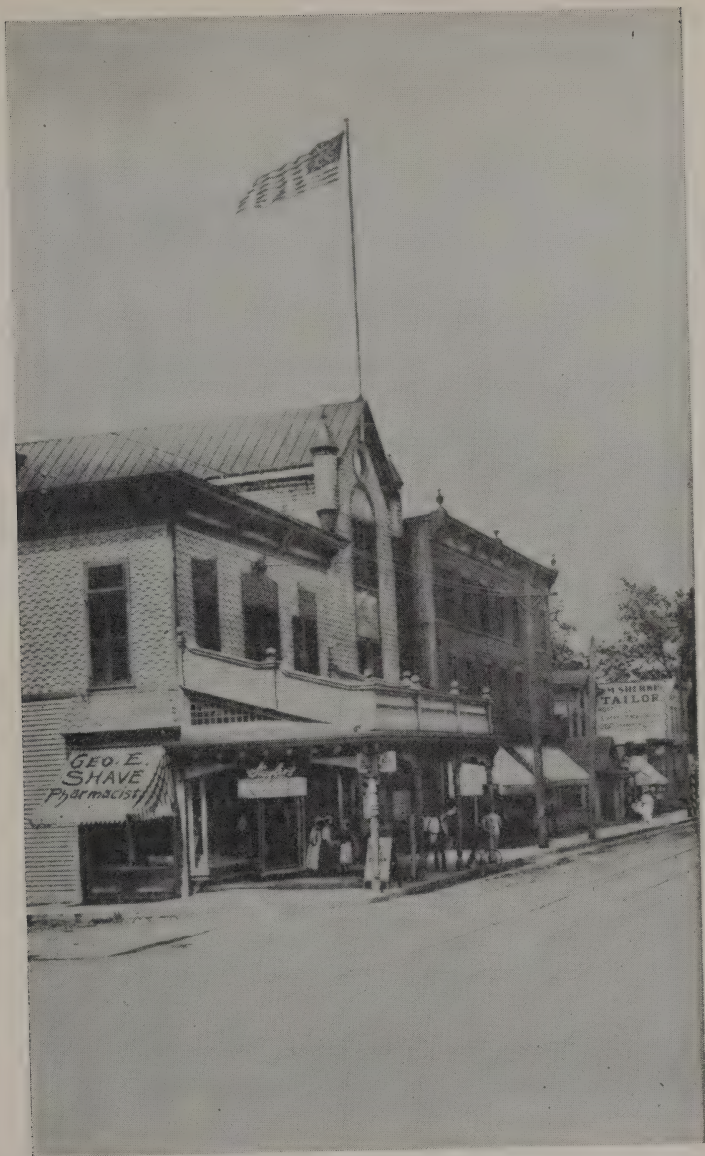
PURCHASE STREET IN 1890'S
Looking South.



WAGNER BUILDING IN 1872
*Group includes the Wagner
family, friends and
neighbors.*



OLD RYE POST OFFICE BUILT IN 1880'S
*Postmaster Daniel Budd and
William Hodgins on steps.*



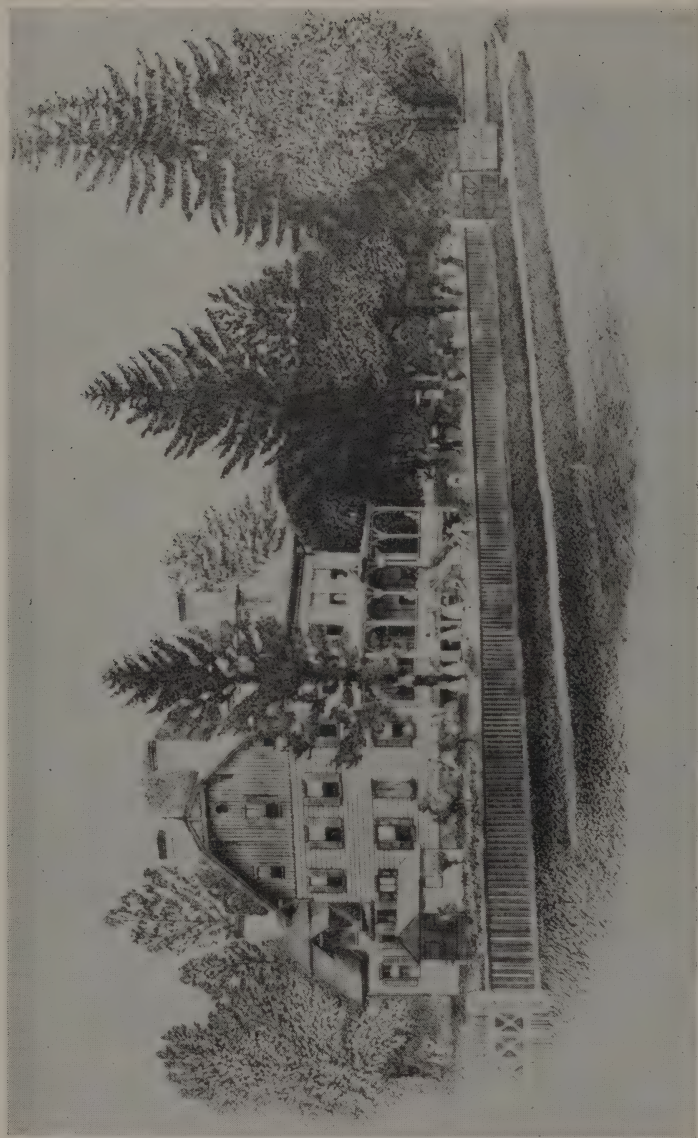
THE OLD LYCEUM
*Note the bandstand on balcony
where concerts were given.*



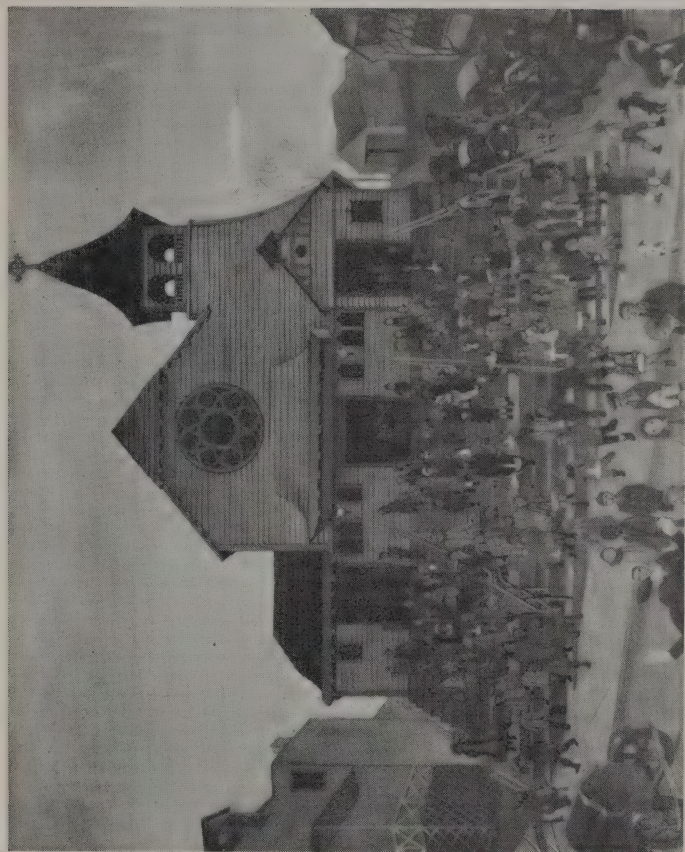
UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 3 IN 1890's



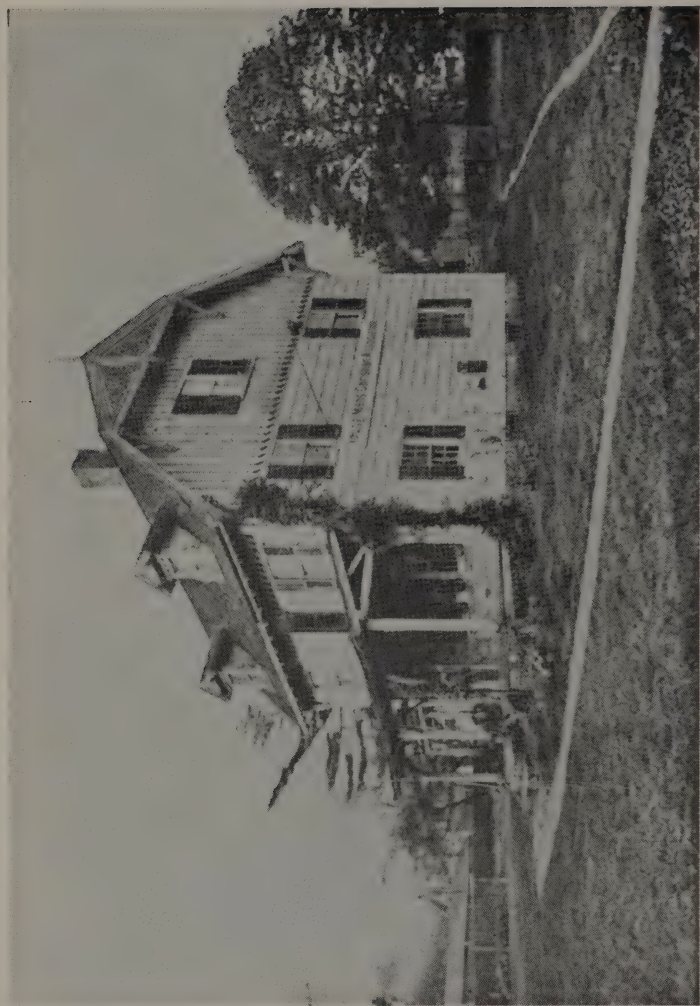
OLD MILTON POINT SCHOOL
Dates back to 1830's or 40's.



RYE SEMINARY
Founded 1869.



CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION
*From painting "Nine O'Clock Mass Out" by
Lauren Ford. Before its removal to
Smith Street in 1924.*



THE PURDY HOUSE

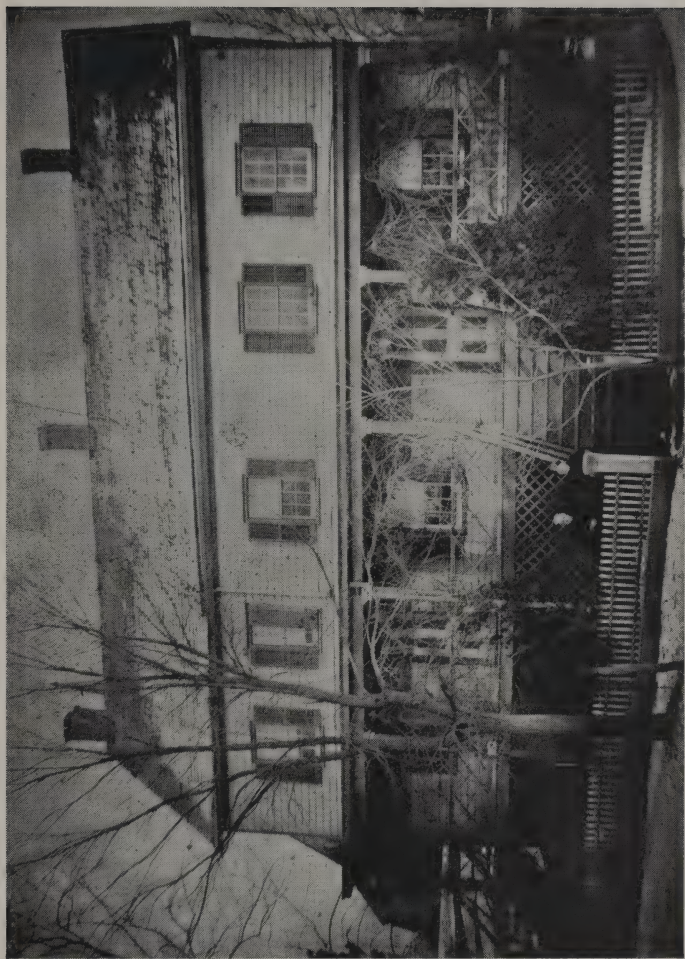
On the site where the Rye National Bank now stands this old house became the Rye Free Reading Room in 1890 and later, from 1916 to the early 1920's, the YMCA



AN EARLY PICTURE OF THE SQUARE HOUSE



THE SQUARE HOUSE
AND
WAR MEMORIAL



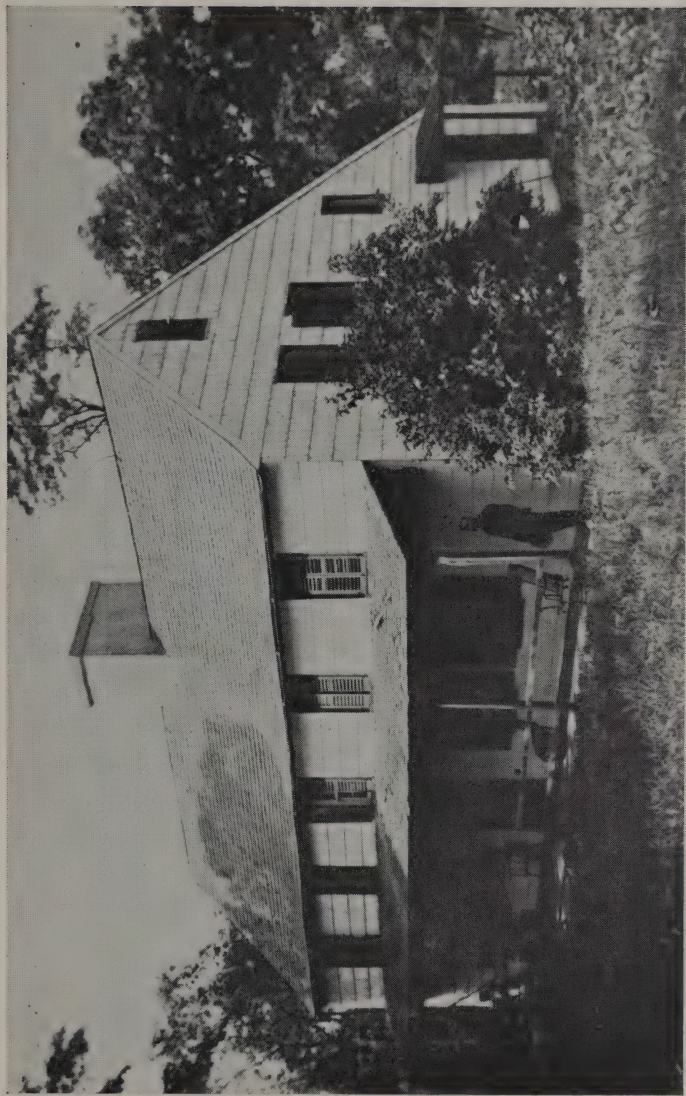
THE OLD STRANG HOUSE

*In colonial times an inn at the corner of Rectory
Street and Post Road. Mrs. Butterfield and
Mrs. Edward Billington at gate.*



OXFORD HOUSE

Built in 1774 at Apawanis Ave. and Milton Road, this shows it as it appeared in the 1880's when owned by Cornelius W. Anderson. The avenue was then known as Anderson's Lane.



HALSTED HOUSE

Located at Milton Road and Rye Beach Avenue this is the oldest house in Rye and one of the earliest in Westchester County. Believed to have been built by Timothy Knapp in late 1600's.



MEAD FARM COTTAGE IN 1893
Built before 1690.

is no doubt that these new groups played an important part in arousing interest in the next big project of the public schools.

Agitation for a central high school began to appear in the *Chronicle* in 1927. (It is simple justice to state here that the editorial columns of the *Chronicle* were extremely helpful in keeping the matter before the public. Time after time when periods of apathy or discouragement were encountered the question would be gently brought up again). Both the elementary schools were now overcrowded, and the one small high school was woefully inadequate. Where, in the early years of the century, the graduating classes often numbered only two or three students, the school was now sending out in June twenty or more. There was no gymnasium, no athletic field. The Milton School trustees held back from the project at first, even proposed to build a high school of their own. Finally it was decided to have experts make a general survey of the entire school system and in 1928 Dr. Englehardt and Dr. Strayer of Columbia University made a long, considered report in which they without hesitation recommended the erection of a central high school and approved the site which had been tentatively chosen, the property on which William H. Parsons' old home stood.

At a joint meeting of the two Boards of Education on January 5, 1929, it was voted to proceed, and this was confirmed by action taken at a special election of taxpayers in August at which two propositions were voted on: that the property should be acquired for a six-year high school at a cost of \$350,000 and that there should be raised by tax a sum not to exceed \$750,000 to erect such a school. Theodore Fremd was first and last for the best in education and his trenchant remark in a meeting, "If Rye can afford to spend \$750,000 on roads it can certainly afford to spend a million dollars on its children" had evidently carried weight.

And now, in this decade of the twenties what of the structures not built with hands? The war had left behind it we are told, over and over again, a train of disillusionment. The old felt defeated, the young were cynical. Perhaps the spectacles with which we are reading the *Chronicle*

are too rosy, but it seems to us that far from "petering out," enthusiasm for service to the community, especially to young people, and a great zest for entertainment were still seeking an outlet.

In any event this was the time when the movement to establish the Boy Scouts and the YMCA on a firmer footing than they had yet enjoyed took definite shape. Boy Scouts of America was founded in 1911 and we are told that shortly after that a group of Rye men met to form a district committee, and that late that year the first Rye troop was organized with M. R. Clark as leader. This troop apparently became inactive, but when in 1916 Weyman Walker and John Flores formed the first strongly established troop of Rye they called it Troop 2. This troop, still going strong, is one of the oldest in Westchester.

In these early years of Scouting publicity, as we know it now, seems to have been a minus quantity. Add to that the fact that there was a never-ending struggle to get leaders and it will explain why there is so little to be found on Scout history. An occasional news item about a Scout rally or an appeal for men to act as scoutmasters appeared from time to time. Yet in October, 1920, Rye Scouts with 36 points won first prize at the annual rally of Westchester County, so there must have been some strength in the organization. In 1921 Rye had three troops, one in Milton, one in West Rye, and one in Rye Village. In 1926 a troop was organized in the Presbyterian Church and a new troop was formed at the Resurrection School in 1929. Scouting always had its appeal for boys. The difficulty was to get the scoutmasters.

The Young Men's Christian Association must have had a better public relations man than the Scouts for it is much easier to follow its history. In May, 1919, Louis Cope, coming down from Bridgeport where he had been engaged in work with young men for four years, found the Rye "Y," which had had such a good start three years earlier somewhat disorganized after the war. By the end of the year he had effected a reorganization of it and a weekly column in the *Chronicle* was carrying news of "Y" activities. At this time among such good citizens as Samuel Thorne, Charles Sheafe, Theodore Fremd, Arthur Corning and others a movement was developed for a "Y" headquarters. In Rye there was, as we have said, no gym, no bowling alleys, basket ball courts or good baseball fields open to boys of the village. In the spring of 1920 a Village Community

Council and the Board of Directors of the "Y" joined together to raise money to build a club house and buy land adjacent for an athletic field. In any event the "Y" had to move, for the Rye National Bank had bought the old Purdy house which the "Y" had been occupying, and was preparing to build. Accordingly the "Y" directors purchased the Raymond property on Locust Avenue, and since they had not yet enough money to build it was decided to use the old house on the property as a makeshift and develop the playing field immediately.

In the meantime, to everyone's regret Mr. Cope had resigned to work in a larger field as Boys' Secretary for the Holy Trinity parish in New York. A testimonial dinner was given him and his work was highly praised for he had already become very popular with the boys and men of the community. Harold Stevens was engaged to replace him and the work of developing a place for outdoor activities proceeded. They built a four-wall handball court, a court for outdoor basket ball and made a baseball field. A statement in 1922 on the growth of the "Y" puts the membership at 194 and says that the house, though poorly suited for its purpose, had now been furnished with billiard and pingpong tables, with a player piano and games, that a Twilight Baseball League had been formed and swimming was taught at the Beach. The following year the Port Chester YMCA and that of Rye joined in a mighty effort to raise more money. Rye's share was about \$46,000, enabling it to pay off the land mortgage, set aside enough for current expenses for two years and still make improvements on the property and the house. That October Mr. Cope, or, as he was always called, "Pa", returned as Secretary, and here he stayed until his death in 1953. We interpolate here that if anyone wishes to know what sort of a person he was he need only read the touching tribute to him that was published in the *Reader's Digest* of July, 1954, an article by William L. Wild called "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met."

Now the old house was moved to face Locust Avenue, some partitions were removed, it was renovated, showers installed, a bowling alley made in the basement, and in September, 1924 a dedication ceremony took place. A special room had been set aside as a memorial (*while he lived*) to Mr. Fremd and a large portrait of him was hung over the mantel. Mr. Henshaw and Mr. Justus Cowles paid a great tribute to his character and to his service to Rye on this

occasion. From now on the "Y" became the center for multifarious activities and a Mecca for boys and young men of the village.

We can give only a brief glimpse of what went on at the new center; the bowling matches in which the Butchers played, the Printers, the Hook and Ladders, the Engine and Hose, the Knights of Columbus, the Trust Company; the Twilight Baseball games; the Discussion Club suppers; the Minstrel Shows and Circuses. A Boys' Exposition in 1925 was a high spot. Held in the Firehouse for three days and nights, it gave the boys a chance to show all their hobbies, their collections, their handicrafts, home made radios, ship models and so on. Junius Bird had a special corner to show his fascinating collection of Indian relics, picked up in Rye for the most part. The Rye Free Reading Room had a booth filled with books on every conceivable interest of boys. Parents and friends came in flocks to see this show.

None of the boys who went on them will ever forget the "Hikes" that Pa Cope originated. He would start out in the long vacation with fifteen or twenty boys to hitchhike to Washington or Canada or California. Friendly motorists would help them out and they would camp out or stay at the YMCA houses in the different towns on the way. They always arrived — and they always came back. From one hike to the coast they returned in two dilapidated jalopies which they bought in Kansas City, and arriving in the midst of the block-party of a Community Field Day nearly broke it up, for an impromptu parade was immediately staged, with the assistance of the band that had come to play for the dancing. It is said that no one enjoyed it more than the relieved parents of the travelers! Another enterprise of the energetic Secretary was a summer camp for boys on the shores of Lake George, but that story comes later.

Mention has been made of the welfare work being carried on by the League of Social Service. Its scope became even broader in the Twenties. To its baby clinic with attending nurse, its Little Mothers class and its school lunches for cases of malnutrition it added another baby clinic in West Rye, and one in Milton. In 1920 the Red Cross turned over to the League a house on Railroad Avenue where it had been maintaining temporary accommodation for convalescent cases leaving the hospital, and for babies whose mothers were incapacitated in some way. This now

became the Social Service Center and it was not long before the League was supporting three nurses, one to supervise the work at the Center, one for school work and the third as a district nurse on call for private homes when needed, charging a nominal sum for services. When the Center had to be given up the League carried on in a house on Wagner Square but in 1927 they found more suitable quarters in rooms in the Parsons building. A dental clinic had been formed in the school and by this time the League had so completely proved to both public schools the value of a nurse's service that the Boards of Education were including a share of their salaries in their budgets. Soon the Parochial School asked the League for school nurse services.

The League was a leader in having diphtheria inoculations established. It also advocated the plan by which in summer the "Y" field was used by young children as a playground. Finally, its members were among the first to recognize the importance of having classes in which the foreign-born might learn English. When, directly after the war, a State Superintendent of Schools came to Rye and said that the school census showed that there were 110 illiterates here — and by this term he meant people who might be well educated in their own native tongues, but could not read and write English — everyone was shocked. Not until 1924 was anything done about it, and then it was the League that formed an evening class for men and later on one for women in their homes. Again the Board of Education took over eventually, sharing with the State the expense of a teacher for the evening class. The public spirited women who made up the membership of the League were obviously the pioneers in many humanitarian movements in Rye. They were a great force for good and citizens who attended their annual meetings and heard the annual reports were impressed anew each year with the amount of work accomplished. Their support came entirely from contributions and once a year they made a public appeal for funds with which to carry on their work.

Everyone who knows anything about hospitals realizes that there are two main efforts in their upkeep. One is the care of the sick and that is left to the technicians, the doctors and the nurses, and it goes on forever. The other is the huge task of financing it — and that goes on for ever and a day. Our newly established United Hospital was no exception to the rule. It makes one fairly dizzy to read of all the devices

to raise money for it to which Rye residents resorted: the big Kirmesses every year, the Arabian Nights Entertainments, the Egyptian Nights, when all the talent of Port Chester and Rye was enlisted and sums as large as twelve and fifteen thousand dollars were realized; we read of gifts of ambulances and of the annual Donation Days when people from the surrounding towns brought in winter stores of fruit and vegetables and canned goods, the school-children also taking part in this effort. In 1921 one of the first "Thrift Shops" was opened in Port Chester and used clothing and furniture were sold there at low prices and a percentage given to the hospital. In 1919 a new memorial wing had been given by Mrs. George D. Barron, Barron Hall, but by 1928 the building was becoming so overcrowded that a campaign was started to raise a million dollars for enlargement. A great many gifts were designated as memorials and it was not long before the amount was raised.

An eminently natural craving for entertainment and relaxation came over the country with the end of the war. Movies were in their infancy, but becoming vastly popular. So it was with enthusiasm that Rye welcomed the advent of the Rye Playhouse which opened on April 23, 1921, with Thomas Meighan in *The Open Road*. The stockholders (it was a local enterprise) may not have realized that they were celebrating Shakespeare's birthday, but at least they paid tribute to the fact that Mr. Meighan's brother lived in Rye. The star himself honored the occasion and made a speech. From that day until the cruel day in August, 1951, when fire leveled it in an hour to a heap of ashes and bricks, the Playhouse furnished welcome entertainment to Rye.

Those were the days of William Hart, in *O'Malley of the Mounted*, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. (*The Mark of Zoro*), Pauline Frederick and Constance Talmadge, names unfamiliar, no doubt, to this generation.

Another echo of the past comes in a news note in the *Chronicle* of October 8, 1921, reporting that the Session of the Presbyterian Church had sent a letter to the Playhouse directors asking them not to go on with their announced plan of Sunday performances. A petition signed by some of the townspeople was circulated also. The Playhouse, although its program had already been announced, graciously bowed to the request. But — very quietly and unostentatiously Sunday movies began in July of the following year, and no comment appeared, at least publicly. The general

feeling seemed to be that if the souls of golf players and tennis enthusiasts at the clubs were not being endangered on Sunday it would do no harm for people not so fortunately placed to indulge in some form of entertainment. At least when Judgment Day came the community could all go together to whichever place it turned out to be.

The first "talking movie" advertised in Rye was in 1928, when people were advised that they would see *and hear* Al Smith making a speech. This was to occur on the Village Green under the auspices of the "Smith for President" Club. In the summer the Rye Playhouse announced that it was installing a Western Electric Movietone to present talking and sound pictures.

At the same time that all this entertainment from outside sources was being brought to our door, healthy and quite extensive movements for self-propelled amusement could be sensed going on in Rye. Perhaps more groups of amateur musicians were formed here in the '20's than in any other period. "Music Week" was announced in Rye in February, 1920. This may well have been one of the first national "weeks", so called, that later on became almost a nuisance. During this week there was special music at all the churches, a concert at the public school and a community concert at the Fire House in which local singers took part. That fall, spurred on by the enthusiasm of Mrs. Warner Churchill, the first of those Community Sings which continued for several years was held. Then came the Little Chorus, conducted by Duncan Bulkley, a group of about thirty music lovers living in Rye. Active in 1921, they gave several concerts of ambitious character. Those of us who can remember that far back can still hear those fresh voices chanting, "Listen to the Lambs!" A Rye Music Club was formed that year, an outgrowth of the interest generated by the Community Sings, and this continued as a live organization for several years, playing a leading part in the succeeding Music Weeks when programs were scheduled for every day and night in the week. Operettas were given and there was always folk-song night when singers in national costumes sang their country's airs. Italian night was popular here. In 1925 when the County Recreation Commission staged a festival with a chorus of two thousand, a Rye Choral Union of thirty voices went to White Plains to take part in it.

Amateur dramatics had its devotees also during these years. There was quite a strong organization here — strong,

because it lasted for four years, and so many enterprises seem to fade out after perhaps one season. This group, organized in 1925, was known as the Community Players, and its first offering was presented in the new Parish House of Christ's Church. Later on with much the same personnel it was known as The Barnacles and had the use of the little Tredenoch Theater in George Knapp's barn. These amateurs were properly ambitious and presented such really grown-up fare as Shaw's *Man of Destiny* and *Great Catherine*, *The Monkey's Paw*, *Rollo's Wild Oat*, *Seven Keys to Baldpate* and others. One act plays were their specialty, giving a greater number of players a chance to take part, and when one looks at the old programs many familiar names appear,— Creighton Peet and his brother Dodd, Duncan Bulkley, Beulah Emmet, Lillian Crompton, Dorothy Howland and many others. In addition to talented actors they had expert help in scene painting and directing, notably Barbara Sellon and Frank Arundel. No other group of this period seems to have had so long continued and consistent a program as the Barnacles although several smaller organizations appeared from time to time, only to vanish. The Rye Social and Dramatic Club gave several well attended performances for the benefit of the Resurrection Church building fund, *A Pair of Sixes* and *Never Again* among them.

People who enjoyed a good lecture had no lack of opportunities for all through the long winter, (and they were longer then) they were being given, either at the school — for years the Board of Education and the League of Social Service sponsored a course — or at the churches and the clubs. Marietta Johnson and Patty Hill spoke at the Rye Seminary on new theories of education, there were illustrated talks at the Milton School on Japan and Switzerland, at the Apawamis Club members and their friends might hear Arthur Vernay tell of hunting tigers in India or Edward O'Brien on adventures in the South Seas.

The Fine Arts Club, a new group, had many outstanding lecturers, among them Ernest Peixotto and John Taylor Arms. The Garden Club brought to Rye excellent speakers on horticultural subjects, and we must not forget that in these years, 1925 and 1926, the Rye Free Reading Room was privileged to present some famous critics and poets, among them Stuart Sherman, Walter de la Mare, Carl Sandburg and James Stephens.

Several important organizations had their beginnings in

the period of which we are writing, one literary, two fraternal, one political, the last military. The Fortnightly Club began in the fall of 1925, meeting in the Presbyterian church house. It is still in existence with a good life expectancy. Mrs. Eugene Watson was for many years the director of this club whose members have never deviated from their original program of book reviewing. In 1922 a branch of the Knights of Columbus was formed here but this has not been active for some time. In 1927 a Lions Club made its debut and has enlisted the active support of Rye's business and professional men for many years. On April 21, 1927, at Mrs. Caroline O'Day's home a chapter of the League of Women Voters was formed which functioned in conjunction with the Westchester County League. Mrs. Sidney Gaskins, Mrs. Ralph Towles, Mrs. E. E. Stiles, Mrs. Homer Williams and Mrs. W. H. Nitschke were among the original members of this group. The military group organized was Rye Post, No. 128 of the American Legion which was formed in 1919 by men released from the services. Fifty-seven men were enrolled with Fairfax Ayres as Commander, Albert W. Putnam, Lt. Commander and William H. Selzer, Adjutant.

The Garden Club of Rye began to bloom and flourish abundantly in these years. It held an annual plant sale on the Green and a flower and vegetable show in the fall; flower and horticultural shows were put on in the Library's Exhibition Room; it conducted a column of advice to gardeners in the *Chronicle*; it planned tree and shrub plantings in neglected spots in the village; and it exhibited in the International Flower Show and came away with a flattering number of prizes and honorable mentions.

Among the many strange characters in the world are those who do not like to go to lectures and be told things. For such as these there were other forms of entertainment. They might go to the championship tennis matches at the Westchester Biltmore for instance. Tilden, Vinson and many other giants played there. Or they might visit beautiful gardens for now had begun the opening of gardens and estates for the benefit of the Westchester Children's Association. Or they might wander around interesting exhibits. The Rye Free Reading Room had started a long series of these in its newly opened Exhibition Room.

The library was growing rapidly. In 1919 it had sold its old property to the Rye National Bank, creating a fund

which made it possible to enlarge its services and to employ an assistant to the librarian. Marcia Dalphin was brought up from New York to succeed Miss Beaman who had left the position to engage in war work, and Mary Fleming who had capably filled in during the interim as Acting Librarian was retained to assist her. With a fund raised by gifts and entertainments a room especially for children had been fitted up and opened on November 4, 1920. There still remained an unfinished room and this it was decided to equip as a room for exhibitions and meetings. Again with gifts, entertainments and campaigns for funds, (special credit being due Mrs. Eugene Watson who conducted a one-woman crusade for the project) and under the supervision of Heathcote Woolsey as architect, this room was finished, operation by operation; heat and light one year, walls and woodwork the next and so on until in 1926 it was finished. Then began the series of exhibits of which we have spoken; paintings and etchings, old dolls, valentines, hand made quilts, a Marine Show, treasured samplers, and all these lent from Rye homes which imparted a special interest. A Home Talent show of handicraft was so popular that it was repeated annually for a time. A further new activity of the library was the publication in the paper of reviews of new books written by library readers, and many a come-hither review was written by Mr. Henshaw, Mr. Charles Sewall, Dr. Humpstone, Mrs. Greig, Mrs. Watson, Mrs. Roger Mitchell, Mrs. Ryder and others.

Through all its vicissitudes — and it had them, particularly in changes of ownership, editors and plant location — the *Rye Chronicle* had been a staunch friend not only of the library as the ample space given it shows, but of all worthy enterprises. In the spring of 1917 Everett H. Gedney, a former Rye boy, became its editor, succeeding William A. Darcey who, after many years in that position, left to enter the army. Mr. Gedney's death in 1918 on the threshold of a most promising career again left the paper without a head, and after his wife had carried it on for a year Howard U. Archer, our present editor took charge. Mr. Archer was well known and liked in Rye. He had represented the *Daily Item of Port Chester* here for several years and this was a happy solution. The paper was now produced on its own machinery in a small shop at 45 Purchase Street but in April, 1923, after some landlord trouble during which it looked for a time as though it would be printed on the street, it

moved to its own building on Purdy Avenue where we may hope that its only troubles henceforth were those that beset all home-town papers, namely labor shortages and thin-skinned subscribers.

For a time there was a rival newspaper in Rye. Reginald P. Sherman, a member of an old Rye family, established the *Rye Courier* in 1909, as a semi-weekly. Coming into the newspaper profession rather late, after an adventurous youth in which he had shipped on a sailing vessel to India, gone twice around the Horn with a Port Chester captain and then settled down for a time as a real estate man in New York, he became a picturesque figure in newspaper circles. He had good news sense and of course knew Rye and its people from A to Z, having taken a prominent part in the founding of the Apawamis Club, the Village Improvement Association, the Rye Free Reading Room, the Village Board of Health and other civic organizations. His editorials were courageous, often controversial, and a small war went on in the editorial columns of both the *Courier* and the *Chronicle* when William A. Darcey was editor of the latter, no quarter being asked or given. After Mr. Sherman's death in 1918 his wife edited it for a time and then sold it. At one stage in its rather meteoric career it was owned by two adventurous young men who attempted to conduct it as a literary sheet. Each of them had written books. Ridley Wells was a Tennessean who had gone from Vanderbilt to Oxford, had been in the war, later was on the *World* and a re-write man on the *Herald*, wrote poetry and collaborated with Allen Tate. Charles Lapworth's experience was with the *London Daily Herald* and the *Daily Mail* under Northcliffe. They were talented and ran some quite delightful articles in the *Courier*. But they were also visionary and impractical and could not sustain the enterprise. For the sake of those who nourish a soft spot in their hearts for visionaries we shall give the end of the story, which is that when last seen they were taking off for the Pacific coast in two dilapidated Fords, and no one ever heard what happened to them. In 1924, the *Courier*, having changed hands three times, was bought out by the *Chronicle* and amalgamated with it under the latter's name.

A number of what we may call "firsts" occurred in the Twenties. For instance; — the first Japanese beetle to appear in Rye was found by Forester John Wahl and put on exhibit in the Square House in 1929. It may not have been the

beetle's fault but it is a coincidence that that year the Village Board appropriated funds for preservation of our trees. The first telephone call from London to Rye was made by Mayor Morehead in 1927 when he called his wife from across the Atlantic. (The *Chronicle* is our authority!) Rye police had their first encounter with rum runners — you will remember that the 18th amendment was passed in 1920 — when a bold party anchored their schooner off Rye Beach by night and transferred three hundred gallons of liquor by launch and rowboats to Manursing Island. Our men took them by strategy and conveyed them to the Police Station where they were duly turned over to the proper authorities.

The American Yacht Club was the starting point in 1926 for the first "Morrissey" expedition. Captain Bob Bartlett was the skipper of this old Newfoundland fishing schooner and a party of explorers among whom George Palmer Putnam of Rye was prominent chartered her, first for a trip to Greenland to collect specimens for the American Museum of Natural History and the next year to Baffin's Island. Geographers, archaeologists, zoologists were among the scientists and adventurers who sailed away under the flags of the Yacht Club and the Explorers' Club. Young David Putnam got the material for his books on these expeditions and Junius Bird got his first taste for the adventures to be found in exploration — or rather his second taste, for the first must have been while hunting for Mohegan arrow heads on Milton Point.

There are two important "firsts" that strictly speaking cannot be claimed for the twenties, yet neither do they fit into the war years. One is the first Community Carol Singing. In 1919, a few days before Christmas, under a big evergreen tree on the Green seventy-five people stood in a heavy snow storm to sing carols together, establishing a tradition which has been followed for thirty-five years. The other is the village party on Labor Day that we all know about. Pa Cope was the prime mover in this first one in 1919, and they have followed the same pattern more or less ever since — a marathon open to any athletic club with prizes given the winner, sixty and ninety yard dashes, tugs of war between the fire-companies, baseball games between Bachelors and Benedicts, races and stunts for the children, refreshments and a general good time. It is a family party on a village scale.

Finally — the State made a new law (never overlook-

ing the least detail, evidently!) about village Presidents. Henceforth, as of July 1, 1927, they were *Mayors*.

There are several other matters, somewhat miscellaneous in nature, which ought not to be omitted from any sketch of the Twenties in Rye. One is transportation. Rye like every other village and city in the country was feeling the impact of the Automobile Age. What about the aeroplane? The time was past when, according to Edwin Lester, a cynic at Kitty Hawk whispered gloomily to his neighbor, "I said it to Orville, I said it to Wilbur, and I'll say it to you: That crate will never leave the ground!" Yet not so far past that an aeroplane in the sky was not an occasion for men and women to crane their necks and look upward. There is a story told that one day in 1919 Mr. Fremd and George Werner had gone down to the County Park on their lawful occasions as Park Commissioners and happened to spy a hydroplane there taking up passengers for trial flights. Mr. Fremd challenged Mr. Werner to go up in it with him, which he did, but with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm. It was a first flight for both. No sooner were they returned safely than Richard Wainwright, late for the Commissioners' meeting, appeared and he, too, wanted to fly. However the pilot would not take up less than two passengers so, in order that Mr. Wainwright should not be disappointed, Mr. Fremd had to make a second trip to the great joy of the reluctant Mr. Werner. True or not, the story goes to show that as late as the Twenties to fly was regarded as something of a hazard. In 1920 a hydroplane was acquired as an attraction at a hospital fete. The comment on this in the paper was, "It is yet a decided novelty to flit heavenward . . . The planes of the Aero-Limited Company make trips regularly to Boston and they are regarded as being very safe."

Only passing reference has been made to the trolley system operated by the N. Y. and Stamford Railway Company. It is a long, long story. Suffice it to say that for many years, from the turn of the century on, it had been a thorn in the flesh. There was constant friction between the company and the Village Board over the terms of franchises, over changes in route, over the company's neglect of upkeep of paving for which it was responsible and the public added fuel to the flames by complaints about service. For one thing the service to the beaches was much better than that through the village proper, and that was naturally a source of irri-

tation to the merchants. By 1924 competition with motor busses was becoming severe and the trolley's financial situation more and more precarious. In 1925 the company made application to operate busses in Rye as part of a county system and the *Chronicle* of May 27, 1927, announces joyously, "Today celebrates the abandonment of the Rye Beach trolley line." It was all over now. In three more months this mode of transportation in Rye was a thing of the past.

Changes were coming in railroad service for Rye. The *Chronicle* in 1920 prints a complaint about the New Haven's express service, alleging that whereas Port Chester had twelve expresses a day Rye had only one, the train leaving New York at 5:29 P.M. None at all in the morning. Not long after this through the efforts of the *Chronicle* and with the help of Mr. Hannan, then the station agent, we find Rye with one bona fide and one semi-express in the forenoon and two in the afternoon. The New Haven's rates came in for criticism too. There were bitter complaints in 1925 because the rate on commutation tickets had gone up 42 per cent and a ticket formerly \$10.56 was now \$14.90. How natural that sounds!

Reinforcements, however, were arriving. In the summer of 1928 announcement was made that soon Rye would have 172 trains to and from New York every day — 53 on the New Haven, 119 on the new road, the New York, Westchester and Boston. And the fare on the latter was to be 49 cents and the commuter's ticket only a little over half the price of the New Haven's.

For a long time the Boston and Westchester had been under construction, creeping north, station by station toward Rye. Service began, officially, on July 1, 1928, but on Saturday, June 30, Rye had a formal "opening". At least it was termed that but it sounds remarkably like a party. The Lions Club took part in planning the affair, and the public was invited. Officials and their guests went to Harrison in busses and then boarded the *First Train to Rye*, where they met a noisy welcome. There were speeches, singing of "The Star Spangled Banner," and Mayor Morehead gave an address in which he dwelt on the influence of the growth of railroads on the advance of civilization. As a crowning touch Mr. L. S. Miller, the President of the road, who had been most courteous and cooperative was presented with the key to the village.

It is a pity to cast a damper on all this festivity but it

must be told that eventually misfortune overtook the Boston and Westchester. In 1938 the tracks were torn up and all that remains in Rye of this once flourishing transportation service is — or so the ticket agent tells us — a deep groove in the ticket office window where the change went to and fro.

In the fall of 1928, the same year that saw the arrival of the Boston and Westchester, the Hutchinson River Parkway built by the County Parkway Commission was thrown open and the prophecy was made that now, at last, the Post Road congestion would be relieved. As we have said we were now in the age of the automobile and while the new railroad failed the Parkway is still very much with us.

This decade in our history is memorable for the forging of a new link with the past. Rye has always been mindful of the fact that we must look back into our mighty ancestors. In the early twenties began an interchange of visits and messages between Rye in England and Rye in New York with resulting ties of friendship that have endured. On a trip abroad A. Outram Sherman had made the acquaintance of Joseph Adams, Mayor of Rye, and in October, 1924, Mr. Adams returned his call, was formally received at the Square House by President Fremd and visited other places of interest in Rye. The following year the Rev. Mr. Henshaw, rector of Christ's Church, was in England and was invited to preach in St. Mary's Church in Rye. A newspaper editor sent a transcript of his talk which was printed in full in the *Chronicle*. When, in 1928, seventeen men of Rye answered a distress signal from a Latvian steamship and were all drowned when the lifeboat capsized in a heavy sea — a severe loss of able-bodied men in such a small town — Mr. Adams sent a cablegram to Mr. Henshaw asking if our Rye would like to help the families of these men. Rye contributed six hundred dollars to the purse that was being made up and Mr. Fremd received a most grateful letter in reply.

The next episode in this international friendship was in the summer of 1929 when Mayor and Mrs. Morehead visited Rye on May 26, and were received with great ceremony. It was Trinity Sunday, the day when the Mayor and Corporation of Rye go every year in procession to the parish church. He who takes pains to look in the July 6th issue of

the *Chronicle* for that year will see a delightful picture of a procession of dignitaries in long robes, carrying maces, and right beside the Mayor of Rye, Sussex, marches the Mayor of Rye, New York, Mr. J. Motley Morehead, in silk hat and frock coat. The *Sussex Express* rather let itself go on this occasion — as witness this:

"The bells pealed joyously as around the grey walls of the venerable church passed the procession on the way to the South door . . . The glittering maces, catching the brilliant rays of the sun as it shone in a cloudless sky; the vivid scarlet mayoral robes; the blue gowns of the aldermen and councillors; the picturesque costume of the Barons of the Cinque Ports in their red cloaks, embroidered waistcoats and lace ruffles; and the more sombre robes of the law made up a picture entirely harmonious with the quaint houses, cobbled footway and mediaeval dignity of the great church. The only startlingly modern note was struck by Colonel Morehead's silk hat and morning clothes."

After the service the American Mayor and his wife were escorted to the Town Hall, treated to cake and wine, and presented with a parchment scroll commemorating the occasion. Mayor Leopold A. Vidler was in office at the time and while he never was able to visit here he did send to the Rye Free Reading Room a copy of his *A New History of Rye*, published in 1934, bearing the inscription, "Presented to the Rye Free Reading Room, Rye, U.S.A. in the hope that it may foster the interest of its citizens in their Mother Town." The former Mayor, Mr. Joseph Adams, however, paid Rye a second visit in 1929, was entertained by Mayor Morehead at a stag dinner at the Apawamis Club and then brought down to the Square House where he presided at the regular Wednesday night meeting of the Board of Trustees.

In the early years of the second World War a new tie was formed with old Rye for in 1942 a joint service was inaugurated to commemorate our united war effort and to offer prayers for all those serving in our armed forces and Great Britain's. Every year in December on the second Sunday in Advent, St. Mary's Church and Christ's Church hold a joint service, with the ocean between. Sometimes the speaker here is an English divine or layman, sometimes he may be merely an Anglophile, as when Dr. Henry Steele Commager was induced to speak and paid a moving tribute to the English character. Appropriate hymns and prayers are chosen and with fine impartiality the congregation sings "America" and "God Save the Queen" — to the same tune.

Unfortunately Rye does not always heed the admonition about ancestors, and one or two occurrences in these years make the thoughtful among us heavy-hearted. We allude specifically to the demolition of two houses, one valued for its associations, the other because it was a fine example of a type of home rapidly disappearing. The old Strang Tavern on the Post Road at the foot of Rectory Street dated from the latter half of the 17th century. In the week of April 7, 1928, it was torn down to make room for a gas station! The other house was "Brookside", the William H. Parsons home, destroyed because it stood in the way of the new High School. "Brookside" was built by Ebenezer Clark in 1836, when Rye was a quiet, obscure little hamlet with, they say, about thirty houses and two hundred residents. The "Oxford", built in 1774, the Square House, the Halsted house, were standing then, and still are. It was a brick house, clapboarded, as many of the fine houses were at that period, and some idea of it may be drawn from a description which speaks of its "four square rooms on the first floor, four bedrooms on the second, all finished with black marble mantels, gold-veined, brought from Belgium" for the eight great open fireplaces. It seems a pity that it could not have been preserved. One thing is sure. It will be over several dead bodies that the Square House is demolished.

To sum up: there is no doubt that in Rye the decade ending in 1929 was one of its "boom" periods. Certain figures, not in population, but in money expended show one side of the story. The statement is made in the April 14, 1928, issue of the *Chronicle* that ten million dollars worth of work was in progress at that time: half that amount was being spent by the County at Playland; one quarter by the county on the sewer system; one million, again by the county, on roads; almost two million by the village of Rye for concrete roads; and that in the past eight months the Engineering Department of the village had issued permits aggregating \$2,231,000.

The Village was spending larger sums than ever before and was to face at the end of the fiscal year a bonded debt of over two million dollars, but it was getting something for its money. Keen business men had been brought on the Board of Trustees during these years and they had coped

with some serious and extremely troublesome problems. J. Motley Morehead, Mayor of Rye from 1926 to 1930, had an effective way of summing up the achievements of the year. His account of his stewardship for the year 1929 will perhaps show as well as anything could the state of affairs with respect to some of Rye's long-existing problems. He reported as follows: that of Rye's fifty-two miles of streets thirty miles were now equipped with modern sewers; that practically all of the village where there was a pressing need was so equipped; that of the village's fifty-two miles of roads about thirty-five were permanently improved with concrete or bitumen paving, the latter having been installed where underground structures such as sewers or water pipes or telephone lines must be put in later; that there were now 233 hydrants in the village on which yearly surveys were made to determine the water pressure; that the number of lights in the village had been increased from 622 to 816; that the village property where the incinerator and disposal plant were located, now called Disbrow Park after Peter Disbrow, one of Rye's founders, was being improved in every way and in a short time would be a park that people would visit for pleasure, instead of regarding it as a blot on the Milton landscape. In a sentence or two the Mayor passed rather lightly over an achievement for which we should be ever grateful, namely the retrieving and setting in place of the old Benjamin Franklin milestones.* The plaque at the entrance to the Square House giving its history was also set up at his instance.

While the Mayor might well be proud of the accomplishments listed in his report to the Board, they had not been achieved without, figuratively speaking, blood and tears. The setting up of Playland had indeed solved the problem of those trouble makers, Rye Beach Amusement Park and Paradise Park, but what an amount of time they had wasted all through the twenties, and earlier. The story is one long series of attempts at adjustment of the grievances of people living near the beaches. They complained, and in many instances justifiably, of conditions there: of sanitation, of noise, especially at night, of the dress and actions of the bathers, of the long lines of automobiles parked in front of their houses, of great crowds of people coming from surrounding towns and New York, pre-empting the beaches and crowding

*See Appendix

into the Town Park. Citizens formed committees to wait upon the Trustees and wrote long letters to the papers, it was all disagreeable, often futile and took up a disproportionate amount of Board-meeting time. Various remedies were tried such as more police, stricter parking laws, higher fees, but it was not until the two rather cheap amusement parks were taken over and run as one well-regulated, well-policed park that the situation was at last dealt with satisfactorily.

Playland had solved the beach problem, the expenditure of large sums of money had established the improvements so needed in sewers, roads, lights and water, but ingenuity and resource and expert advice were needed to cope with the planning and zoning problems which had arisen. As early as 1921 there began to be agitation for some sort of overall planning for the village, which had been growing up in a somewhat haphazard fashion. This might be cited as an example of some of the problems coming up at this time. The Westchester Biltmore Club had purchased in the spring of 1921 the old Riding Academy on the corner of Highland Road and Purchase Street, and planned to erect there a large building to house their employees. Immediately a petition against it was signed by residents of the neighborhood. A prompt resolution by the Trustees forbidding the erection of any building until its plans had been approved halted this. Fortunately in May, 1921, a new state law was passed enabling Village Boards to zone their villages for residential and business districts and this gave our Board new powers.

Rye's first zoning resolution was passed in August, 1921. In the fall of 1922 a Planning Commission was appointed. It was announced that the village was to be entirely rezoned, and on February 23, 1923, the Board adopted a comprehensive ordinance recommended by this commission, making three zones; Residential, Business and Light Industry and Heavy Industries. Later they eliminated the heavy industries, saying firmly, "No factories, no foundries."

In Mayor Morehead's March, 1928, report he stated that a new Planning Commission had been appointed, consisting of Julian Beaty, Frederick A. Godley, James McCullough, Joseph Park and George Henderson and that a firm of engineers had been employed to work with them. Finally, in July of that year a new zoning map, a zoning ordinance and building code were adopted which held good until 1942 when Rye became a city.

V

THE THIRTIES

IN February, 1930, Mayor Morehead who had accomplished so much for Rye during his term of office, resigned, having been honored with the appointment of minister to Sweden by President Hoover. His unexpired term was completed by Acting-Mayor Archibald A. Forrest. The mantle next fell on the shoulders of Livingston Platt who had been serving as Trustee since 1926. If ever a Mayor's shoulders needed to be broad it was now for it was directly following the great market crash and at the beginning of the long, hard period of depression that ensued. Conditions indicated not a Forward, March! but, rather, a Hold Firm! Again, as so often before, Rye was lucky, for the fort was nobly held by the new Mayor and his Board. In Mr. Platt's own words: "We did those things that had to be done, we balanced our budgets, we paid our existing debts and incurred few others, and our citizens apparently were happy and content with their local government."

The American people had had a rude awakening in 1929. They had felt their economic foundations rocking beneath them. And things did not get better. They got worse — and stayed that way. The temper of the times in Rye, as everywhere, was against spending, so that when Mayor Platt in his first report to the people in 1931 said that the Board had simply marked time, had done all it could to keep down expenses and village taxes especially, because of the heavy school taxes made necessary by the building of the new school, his words fell on grateful ears. For three years in succession the budget was reduced ten per cent. Another help to the taxpayer was the concession that he might pay his tax in two installments. The taxpayers cooperated; so well that in 1934 the statement was made that while many villages in Westchester were having trouble when they tried to borrow, Rye's

credit was good, and when we needed to borrow \$100,000 in anticipation of taxes we had no difficulty.

Our two Rye banks stood as firm as did our government in this crisis. Like every bank in the state they closed their doors on March 4, 1933, in accordance with the President's mandate. On the first date permitted, March 13th, those doors stood open and on the front page of the *Rye Chronicle* that week appeared a letter from the Village Board to the Directors congratulating them on the way they handled the situation. "In Rye we *know* our bankers," said the paper's leading editorial proudly.

Municipal housekeeping is not unlike that of individuals. No matter how hard times are, there are things that people wish they could have, little extras that would make life better, a little more comfortable. Even our careful Village Fathers felt slightly wistful, for instance, about a new municipal building. Yet when the subject was aired briefly in 1931 and some one came on the run to offer for sale the centrally located plot on the Post Road on which the old parochial school stood, complete with building, the scheme was tabled, as was also the plan to build on village property adjacent to the Fire House. No, they would wait until the bond market was more favorable.

The Village Board had many things to worry them in the '30's. Conditions in the Town Park were again disturbing residents of the beach section. Citizens again began coming to trustees' meetings to complain about the Town Park being so run over by Playland visitors that Rye people had no use of it; about houses being let for the summer to undesirable tenants; about parking on vacant lots, creating an impossible situation; and, of course, about the noise at night. A Milton Point Property Owners' Protective Association was formed which held protest meetings and appealed to have the Park restricted to Rye residents. Moreover a great many problems in zoning occupied the Trustees in this period, especially in connection with apartment house building.

It is not simple to give a clear picture of this decade in Rye—or anywhere in the country. It was a period of confusion and bewilderment added to real distress, and the more gymnastics the alphabet went through—with the NRA, and the FHA, the AAA and CCC, to mention only a few—the less the average man knew where to turn. Soon salaries as well as budgets began to be cut, first of all the

village employees, then teachers; ten per cent the first year, another ten next year. Where would it stop? When at the end of 1930 the League of Social Service made its annual appeal for funds a new urgency could be felt "It is evident that there will be more real destitution than for many years" it said.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the effort put forth on all sides in these years to alleviate the situation of those in need. We know how Rye had leaped into action in the war years. This, too, was war, of sorts, and again shoulders were put to the wheel. The Red Cross, the League of Social Service, the Lions Club, the churches, the schools, all played a part. A Mayor's Emergency Relief Committee was formed and the Square House made a headquarters for the unemployed; a Milton Relief Committee functioned for that district; a Women's Unemployment Relief conducted workrooms where women were put to work sewing for Grasslands and the Red Cross, and given hot lunches at midday; barrels were put in the markets and shoppers asked to drop in them packages of food to be collected and distributed; women worked in their homes canning fruit and vegetables for winter relief. In 1933 a Community Cupboard was formed as a project of the Women's Unemployment Relief Committee and became so useful that, as we know, it still functions. Where possible unemployed men were put to work on projects which were useful even though not immediately urgent, such as cleaning out Blind Brook in 1931 and improving and beautifying the western approach to the railroad station and mitigating the hazard of grass fires, of which Rye had entirely too many, by cutting down weeds and undergrowth. The village, it may be interpolated, got into hot water at one point when, in carrying out the ordinance against weeds, (especially ragweed against which Mrs. Simeon Ford crusaded for many years) the workmen made such a clean sweep that the Garden Club and the bird lovers rose up in their wrath and protested against this wholesale butchery! How hard it is to please everybody!

And that reminds us of the Case of the German Cannon! Which is a sore spot in some memories and yet has elements of a certain wry humor, particularly in the outcome. Some years after the war ended a cannon captured by our army from the Germans was obtained from the government and set up in the little park near the War Memorial. It took some influence to get it and the men who placed

it there were proud of their success. Ten years passed and a time came when the members of the Garden Club made plans for landscaping the little park, resodding and replanting it and generally beautifying a spot very prominent in the village. It was thought that this "instrument of death" did not blend in with the effect they wished to produce and others contended that it obstructed the view of Post Road motorists, making a traffic hazard, also that children climbed on it (which they did) and might get hurt. Accordingly it was moved down to Disbrow Park. Immediately letters were received in protest from Col. Morehead, Col. Wainwright, General Harbord, and from Roger Sherman of the American Legion. If it must be moved, they said, at least put it in some honorable and prominent place. The Trustees lent an obedient ear and back came the cannon, this time to the Village Green. The end of the story is that when World War II was in progress the old cannon was made into scrap iron and sent back to Hitler.

Looking back at those years from the vantage point of 1954 it seems, as we have said, a time of confusion. Yet life had to go on and people came to the conclusion as they always do in times of trouble that the only thing to do is to take short views and live one day at a time. Living could not stop just because the economic rug had been pulled out from under America's feet. Though it did stop for some men who could not take it — and abruptly, as too often the morning paper testified.

Rye was pinching its pennies but there were one or two "musts" ahead, pre-eminently a new police headquarters. As long as fifteen years before this time the old police station had been officially condemned by the state as antiquated and insanitary. In 1935 the Federal Emergency Relief Administration was set up and Rye decided to make formal application for assistance under President Roosevelt's four billion public relief program. In the grant requested were included funds not only to help build the new police station but to restore the Square House which was badly in need of repair, and to improve the Milton Fire House. It was estimated that the cost of these three projects would amount to about \$150,000 of which the government would pay 45 percent and the balance would be financed by the Village with short term bonds.

The request was granted and on June 13, 1936, Mayor Platt laid the cornerstone of our present Police Station.

When and if that cornerstone is ever opened it will be found to contain a varied assortment of objects: \$7.50 worth of stamps, contributed by the Mayor (an enthusiastic collector), the usual current issues of local and New York newspapers, a map of the village, a 1936 dog license and — picturesque touch — a handful of old *iron* nails from the Square House.

The restoration of the Square House was now under way (hence the nails!) and the village offices had been moved to the Parsons Building. It was undertaken we rejoice to say, with real veneration and affection, under the supervision of Heathcote Woolsey. A partition which hid an old fireplace in the room to the left of the entrance was cleared away and it was a thrilling surprise to discover the panelling which had been behind there for years and years. Old photographs and records were examined when questions came up. Should there be a porch across the front or should the one in existence be removed to make the building architecturally perfect? Should there be a picket fence? A picket fence was clearly visible in the old pictures of the house. But a picket fence such as the architect envisioned would cost eight hundred dollars! Heads were shaken. Suddenly some one remembers that PWA is paying forty-five per cent. The picket fence goes up! The old Square House when it re-opened on October 30, 1936 was, considering the uses to which it must be put, as near its original state as possible. The work was complete except for a flagstone walk upon which the Mayor insisted, for a concrete walk would have been completely out of keeping. This must wait until Spring. And the cost? About \$20,000 of which Rye paid approximately \$11,000, which was probably money well spent since it included the cost of a vault with enlarged fireproof storage facilities for village records.

A handsome grandfather's clock stands at one end of the Council Room in the Square House and the inscription on it reads, "Upon the restoration of the Square House as a Municipal Building in 1936 this clock was presented to the Village of Rye by and on behalf of those citizens who have occupied the position of President or Mayor since its incorporation in 1904." After which follows the names of these citizens. This two hundred year old clock was discovered up-state by Mr. Morehead who interested former Presidents and Mayors in buying it and giving it to the Village. Thoroughly renovated, it is thought to be good for another two centuries.

THE THIRTIES

By January 1st the work at the Milton Firehouse was finished and on the 14th the new Police Headquarters was opened for inspection. Rather than enlarging here on the beauties of the new building and a fine one it is, we choose to tell a little story that came out in the *Chronicle* about this time which explains how the police pension fund came to be richer by \$61.75 as a result of the housecleaning that took place when the old headquarters was abandoned. Standing in an obscure corner of the old Elm Street station was a gambling machine which had been taken in a raid fifteen years earlier. Something had to be done with it so Chief Balls thought he would open it. Whereupon out fell a load of coins!

Much interest, naturally, was felt in these various enterprises and someone conceived the idea of having a general looking over, not only of the new and remodeled buildings, but of all Rye's public buildings. Accordingly, Saturday, February 6th was proclaimed "Visitation Day" and from 12:30 to 4 P.M. open house was kept, not only at the Square House where members of the Woman's Club acted as hostesses, the Police Station and the Milton Firehouse but at the new Post Office, the Library, the "Y," the schools and churches. At 4:30 all came together at the High School auditorium where the Village Historian, Mr. Henshaw, spoke and Mayor Platt gave an interesting account of village matters.

The New Deal had spent quite a sum in Rye but it must not be forgotten that the Post Office Department had not long since made us an outright gift of a new post office building and the land on which it stood. On the corner of Third Street and Purdy Avenue an impressive ceremony took place on September 11, 1936, when, after a parade with flags flying a crowd of village officials and prominent citizens listened to speeches by Julian Beaty, Mayor Platt, Theodore Fremd and Mrs. Caroline O'Day and then congratulated Rye's Postmistress, Mrs. Teresa V. Ball, and her staff on their new home. About a year later the Rye Post Office again figured in the news when it was dignified by the addition of a mural painted by Guy Pene du Bois which depicted John Jay and his family at the home in Rye.

Two other happenings at about this time served to bring into prominence the relation of the Jay family to Rye. On a summer day in 1938 the Westchester Historical Society on one of its annual field trips took occasion to visit Rye,

Port Chester and Greenwich. In Rye their conductor was the Reverend Mr. Henshaw. First they visited the Jay cemetery, then Christ's Church where Mr. Henshaw told them its history and showed them its treasures, among them the Jay family Bible, the record of James Fenimore Cooper's marriage in 1811 to Susan De Lancey and the chalice presented in 1706 by Queen Anne. Then they went to the Square House where Mayor Platt greeted them and recounted the story of our greatest historical treasure. The second occurrence was two years later when there was a nation-wide observance of the 150th anniversary of the first sitting of the U.S. Supreme Court. Exercises were conducted at John Jay's grave by a committee appointed by the Mayor headed by Roger Sherman, Mr. Henshaw's successor as Village Historian. Some forty members of the bar living in Rye were listed on the general committee for this observance.

Rye is always reaching back into history. In 1937 the operation of the Milton Boat Yard was taken over by Edgar John and Associates and a long piece in the *Chronicle* recalled some of the history of this old, old yard. Among other points brought out was the fact that famous boats had been built here in years past. One best remembered is the sloop, *Madeleine*, built in 1869 by David Kirby of Rye. Some years later she was altered to schooner rig, met the Canadian challenger for America's Cup, *Countess of Dufferin*, raced her and won. This yard is famous also as the birthplace of the "Wee Scots".

Still with history in mind it may be of interest to note that in the '30's the *Rye Chronicle* tied for third place with two other papers in a state-wide competition among weeklies. The contest was conducted by the New York Historical Association and the honor to our local paper was in recognition of a series of articles on the origin and growth of our village based on Baird's *History of Rye* and written by Charles Moxhay. Taken in combination with the many pencil sketches by Whitman Bailey that were appearing at the same time showing scenes and old buildings in Rye they gave our local paper a distinct historical flavor.

Life in the '30's may have been confusing but at least it was not dull for things of interest and considerable im-

portance were happening from time to time. For instance the repeal of the 18th amendment in December, 1933. However this did not come in time to entirely save Rye's reputation as a law abiding community for three years earlier, to quote from the press:—"Rye has the doubtful distinction of possessing one of the biggest distilleries in this section of the country." A second was discovered in 1932. The modus operandi in both cases seems to have been this: a personable stranger would appear, give a fictitious name and rent a large house in a good neighborhood. The first floor would be furnished handsomely, window drapes were especially good — and presumably, opaque — but the top floors would be found to be quite differently equipped. In each of these cases the still was discovered through neighbors noticing disagreeable odors which sooner or later were bound to emanate from the premises. Our innocent incinerator came in for many unjust accusations at this time we are told.

The George Washington Bicentennial sponsored by no less an authority than the United State government was celebrated throughout the country in 1932, and Rye observed it fittingly with a community tribute at the High School at which Dixon Ryan Fox was the speaker, and with exhibits in the Square House, the Library and the schools.

Rye has perhaps a feeling of special proprietorship in our great national hero because of his connection with the Square House but there was staged here in the same year, 1932, a tribute to a great American woman which touched us even more nearly. On May 20-21 Amelia Earhart became the first woman to make a solo flight across the Atlantic. She became also world-famous over night. At this time Miss Earhart (Mrs. George Palmer Putnam in private life) was living in a house on property which was part in Harrison, part in Rye, and on June 27 a Welcome Home Celebration was held in each village. A small bandstand, since removed, stood then on the Village Green and around this in the late afternoon gathered a crowd of residents eager to see the heroine of the day, among them several hundred school children. When she arrived with an escort from Harrison the Rye Fire Department formed a guard of honor and a naval militia band played. Some of us who were there remember her perched most informally on the railing, a slight, gallant figure with wind blown hair, waving to the children and modestly accepting the tribute paid her. In his address of welcome Mayor Platt expressed the feeling

of all Rye when he said, "While your house is in Harrison your garden is in Rye, and we hope that your heart is where your garden is."

A testimonial dinner at the Westchester Country Club that evening completed the welcome and a great gathering of notable men and women from this vicinity attended it. Among those who spoke and paid an enthusiastic and generous tribute to Miss Earhart was Ruth Nichols, Rye's other famous woman aeronaut. Miss Nichols who has broken many records earned the further distinction in 1944 of being cited by the American Federation of Women's Clubs as one of the three women pioneers who have contributed the most outstanding service to aviation and one of the fifty-two outstanding women leaders of the world.

Among other unrelated happenings was the first appearance in Rye of two forms of entertainment which were destined to sweep the country, Bingo and miniature golf, the former introduced by the Dad's Club of the Resurrection School and the latter by the Westchester Biltmore, which opened on Purchase Street and Highland Road what they called the Biltmore Junior Golf Club for Tom Thumb Golfers; in 1932 the *Chronicle* reported another "first" — "Quick frozen foods which have been attracting nation wide attention as representing a revolutionary system of food distribution are to be introduced in Rye by John Sherburne of Milton Road." A "blood bank" was established at the United Hospital in 1938, said to be the first to be set up in any Westchester hospital. In 1933 the American Yacht Club began to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary and it was announced in the following summer that fifty years previous the Club had sponsored America's first long-distance boat race, — a run from Rye to Fisher's Island for steam yachts. Now the same course was to be covered in a Jubilee Race from Milton Point to New London — but with sails alone. 1934 was further made memorable by being the last year in which fireworks for the Fourth of July could be procured, legally, in Rye.

A not-so-pleasant discovery was made now. Dutch elm disease was found in a tree on Locust Avenue in 1933. The first case in the country had turned up in Cleveland three years earlier. Rye had begun at this time a constructive and forward-looking care of its beautiful trees. War was being waged against the tent caterpillar. John Wahl had been appointed Village Forester and his instructions were to

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make a comprehensive survey of the entire village to protect Rye's trees to the fullest extent. A long article by him describes in detail the work that was done on the wonderful old English linden on the High School grounds, the "tree with the iron heart." When it was discovered that it was so weakened by internal decay that the next high wind might topple it a squad of tree surgeons spent several weeks renovating it. The decayed center was removed and the cavity after thorough excavation extended from a point below the ground to one twenty feet up the trunk. The shell was braced with steel, the inside disinfected and filled with three tons of concrete — the iron heart — and the century old tree after almost twenty years since its major operation is standing there as staunch and true, seemingly, as ever.* Down at Disbrow Park, in the meantime, at the instance of Trustee A. A. Forrest a nursery of young trees was being developed from which replacements could be made when trees died or were found to be diseased. The trees of Rye had found good friends.

The first half of the decade saw the founding of at least six organizations of such strength and influence that they have continued to function without interruption, and are of importance to the community.

The beginning of organized Girl Scouts in Rye was in 1930 when Mrs. Yale Stevens applied to the County Council for permission to form a Brownie troop with adequate leadership. With Kathryn Wright as leader the Brownies used to meet in the Manny garage on Apawamis Avenue but when they reached Girl Scout age a regular troop of Scouts was organized, meeting at the Rye Country Day School. In 1932 the first Girl Scout Council of Rye was formed with Mrs. Stevens as Commissioner. The first Court of Awards was held on the Village Green on May 29, 1932, at which time there were five troops in the Rye Council. The girls of Rye had made a later start in scouting than the boys but it must be said that the organization seems to

*John Wahl, Village Forester of Rye for fifteen years, died in 1942.

It is a satisfaction to record here that on Memorial Day, 1944, the old linden tree was dedicated to him in a memorial ceremony. Moyer Sewall paid sincere tribute to the man who had done so much towards the preservation of Rye's great natural beauties.

A bronze tablet inscribed to his memory now marks the tree.

have progressed more rapidly and strongly, for in six years there were in existence five Scout troops, three Brownie packs and one Girl Scout Mariners, the latter composed of girls of fifteen years and up. 176 girls were enrolled.

Now Rye's vigorous Woman's Club enters upon the stage. Early in the spring of 1933 a small group met at Mrs. Julian Beaty's home and after discussion decided that a woman's club ought to be formed in Rye if enough interest could be aroused. At a meeting on April 12 held at the Square House, presided over by Mrs. George Strange, it was agreed to go ahead with the project and on the 19th an organization meeting was held at the Square House at which Mrs. Beaty was elected as the first President. The charter membership was two hundred sixty-five and the first meeting was held in October in the Music Room of the High School with Mary Ritter Beard as guest speaker. The club rapidly developed its sections: Art, Music, Drama, Literature, Gardening and Civic matters, and was soon embarked on an interesting and constructive program. In its second year it published *Trends*, a club magazine of distinctive format and content, its columns open to the general public as well as members. Only two more issues appeared which seemed a pity. Rye had a great deal of latent talent as some of the articles clearly showed. A club headquarters was established for two years in an old, rambling house on upper Purchase Street. In 1936 the club moved to new rooms in Blind Brook Lodge but these were eventually given up. Then, as now, one of its chief handicaps was the lack of suitable, permanent headquarters, but the club, more power to it, has not let that hold it back from a fine record of accomplishment.

The year that saw the founding of the Woman's Club was also that in which the Community Chest was started in Rye. Its first campaign was launched at a dinner at the Rye High School on November 16, 1933, and A. A. Forrest was the first chairman. The directors aimed at a chest of \$46,000 to take care of eight agencies; the United Hospital, the YMCA, the Red Cross, the League of Social Service, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Salvation Army and the Community Cupboard. They collected \$49,486.38. The "one appeal" idea worked like a charm and we all know that in spite of a moment's faltering in 1953, when it was nearly given up because of several lean years, it has worked down to this day. Not that the project has ever been an

easy one and infinite credit should be given the campaign chairmen and their loyal workers.

The following year, 1934, saw the founding of the Rye Board of Trade. At various times in Rye's history the business men of the village had formed organizations to promote and maintain better business relations, taking "Buy in Rye" as their slogan. The records show that one such group, calling itself the Business Men's Association, was in existence in 1910, and also that a Chamber of Commerce was functioning in 1924. It is not quite clear how long these lasted, At all events a Board of Trade was organized in Rye on the 26th of January, 1934, which was strong enough to continue uninterruptedly. In May of that year they sponsored a "Prosperity Week", which was endorsed by the Lions Club and the Woman's Club. It was announced as an effort to create better understanding between its members and the public, and the advertisements go to show that the various merchants outdid themselves with big bargains and "specials". The organization's concept of its place in the scheme of things, however, is broader than bargain weeks merely, and it has always tried to make Rye a friendly place in which to shop. And how history repeats itself! Just twenty years ago the Board of Trade was working for better parking conditions and appealing to the public to do at least *some* of its parking on side streets instead of Purchase Street. It had thought for its workers, too, and two years later we find it inaugurating the early closing on Wednesdays. Growing even more ambitious, the Board held a meeting to discuss the advisability of the early closing being effected the year around, but we are told that there was great difference of opinion on this point and there is no evidence that such a radical idea was ever put into effect.

The start of a Rye Recreation Commission dates back to March, 1935, when, at the instigation of the "Y," a committee was appointed to investigate the need of summer recreation facilities for the children of Rye who did not go to vacation camps. A questionnaire was sent out to the schools and when the replies came back it was clearly evident that such a need did exist. Promptly in the last week of June a Recreation Commission was formed with Dr. Howard B. King at its head and on July 1st the "Y" grounds were opened as an official summer playground under trained supervision. Much of the equipment was donated. Under good leadership it prospered and so good was the

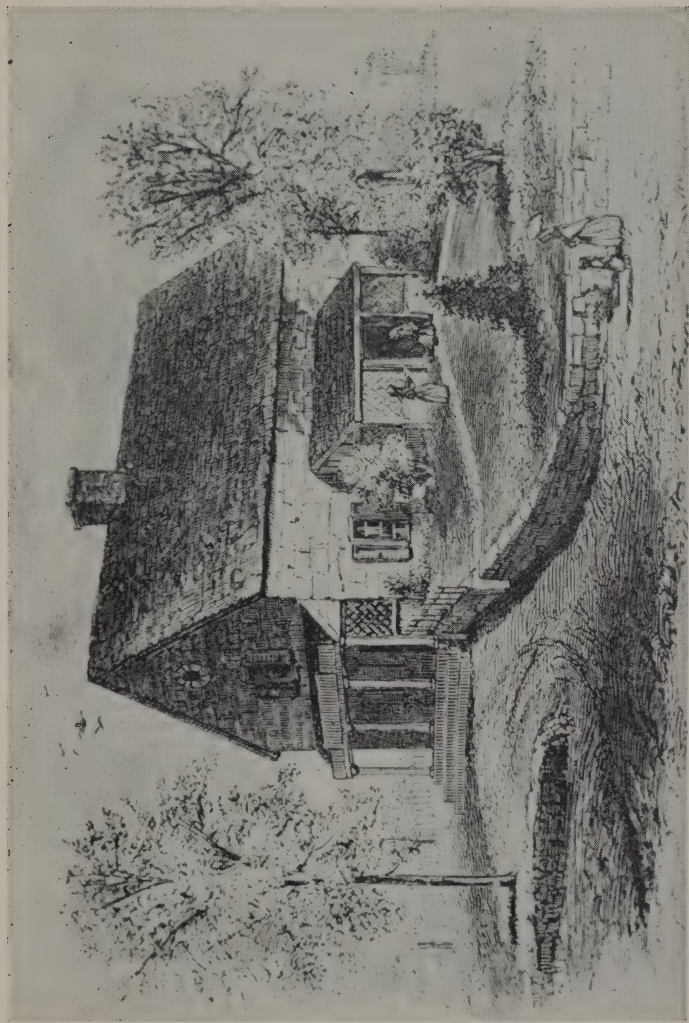
attendance that the Village Trustees were favorably impressed and appropriated \$300 for it, increasing it the next year to \$500. In 1939 the "Y" started a Summer Day-Camp for boys of seven to nine years on the grounds of the W. G. Nichols estate and maintained it for several seasons. It was called "Little Camp Mohican."

In 1936 on the 10th of January a group of Rye business women met and formed the Rye Business and Professional Women's Club with Mrs. Teresa V. Ball as President. This was the seventh group in Westchester County to be affiliated with the State Federation. In April the Club received its charter and enrolled thirty-one women as members. Many professions and businesses were represented. Rye real estate brokers, secretaries, journalists, nurses, physicians, saleswomen, and teachers made up the early membership of the club.

We have covered now the beginnings of certain strong, new organizations of the Thirties which made a permanent place for themselves in our community, but some reference should be made to those already established since they had by no means been standing still.

The League of Social Service and the Lions Club had been extremely active, finding in the economic stresses of the times a special challenge to which they faced up nobly. To its baby clinics and its diphtheria inoculations the League had added a tuberculosis clinic. The Boards of Education of the two public schools had now their own school nurses but the League was still carrying on at the Parochial School and conducting the Americanization and English classes for foreign born women in their homes. The workers distributed milk to needy cases, they sent boys and girls to summer camps who would otherwise have not been able to go, they distributed clothing and Christmas baskets and, particularly important at this time, because of the unique confidence which the nurses in their home visits had built up, the League was continually called on by other organizations to indicate where help was most needed.

The eyes of the Lions seemed to be everywhere and their scouts frequently reported on matters that needed attention. If the Village Green was lacking benches (at one time there were only two there!) the Lions appointed a committee to



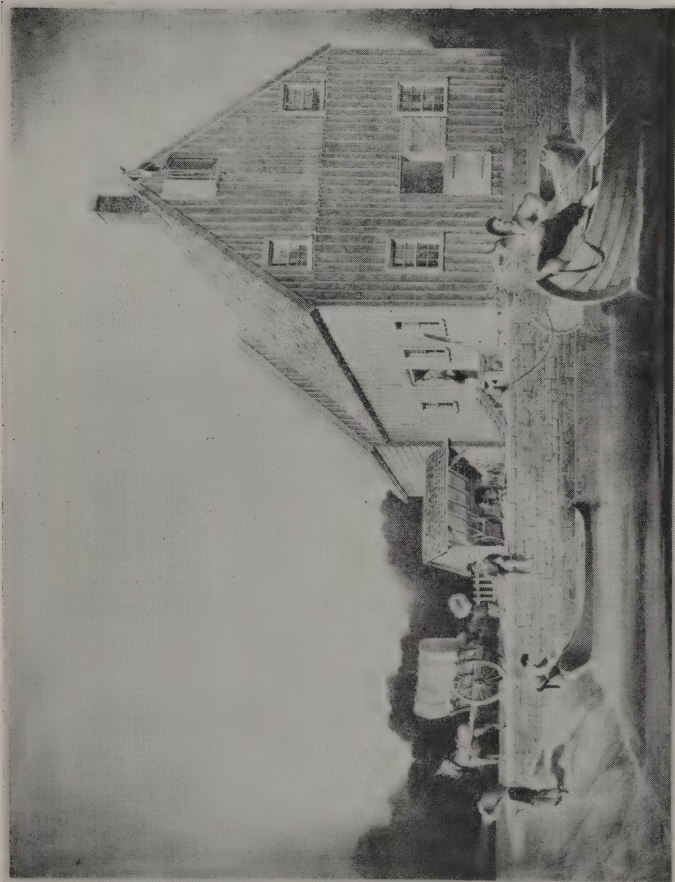
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Stone house on Post Road known as Van Sicklin's.
Chosen to be fortified against Indian attack.
Demolished in 1868 and Methodist
parsonage built on site.



51 MILTON ROAD IN EARLY DAYS

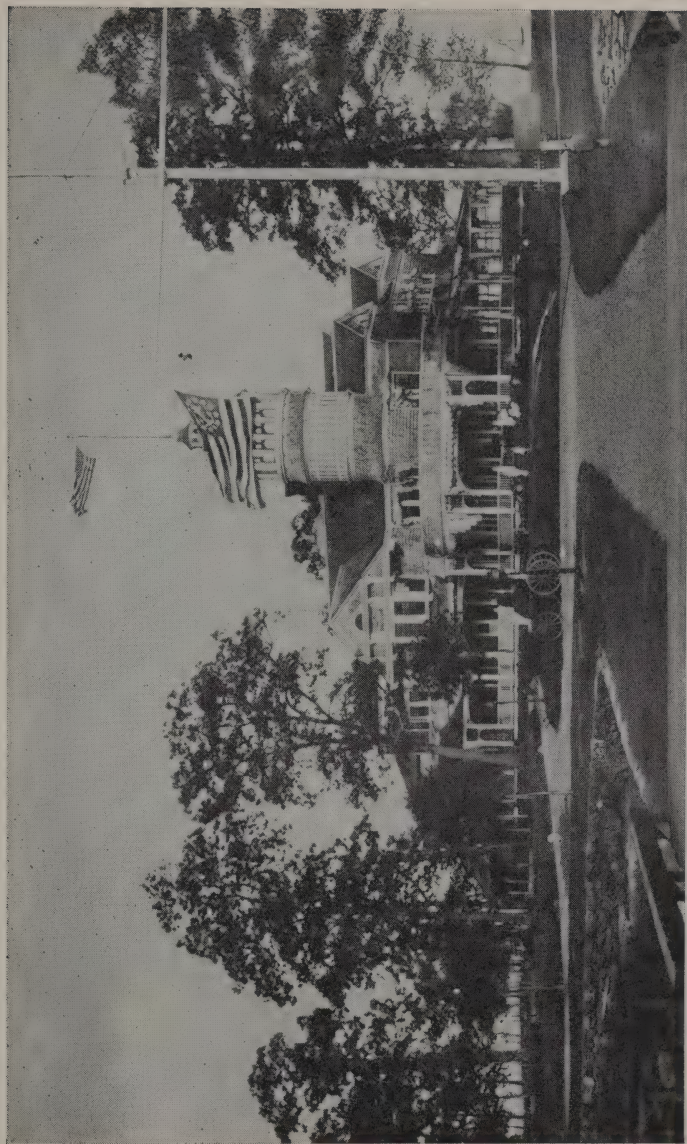
Built in 1788 to replace the first Christ's Church burned during the Revolution. When replaced by a third church in 1855 it was moved across the street and converted into a dwelling house.



OLD TIDE MILL ON KIRBY LANE
*Built in 1770 by Wright Frost and
owned and operated for fifty
years by David Kirby.*



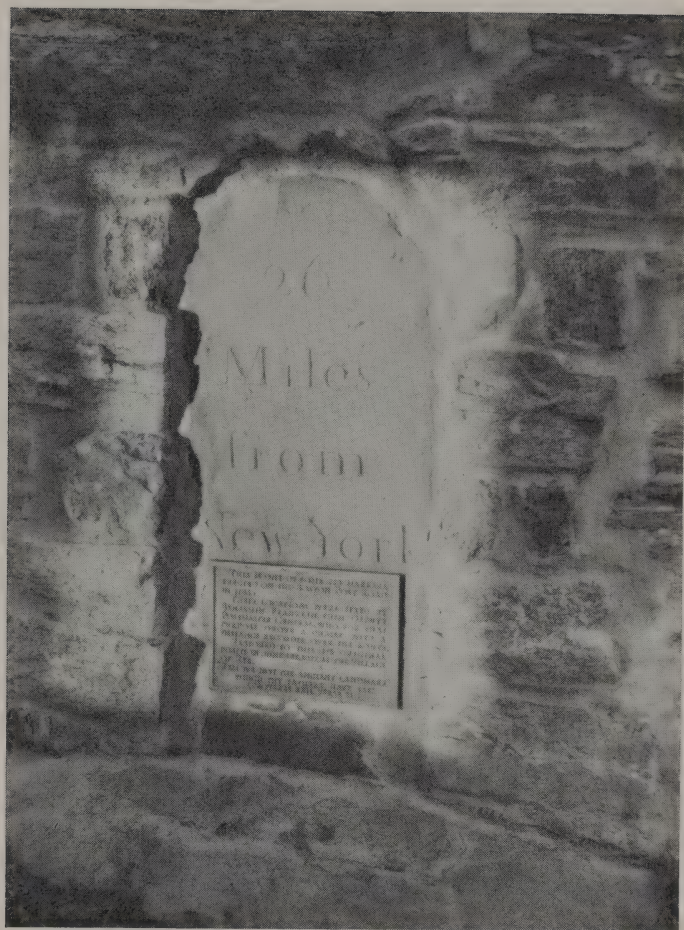
CHAPMAN'S MILL
*Built about 1867 at head of Milton Creek
Destroyed by fire in early 1900's.*



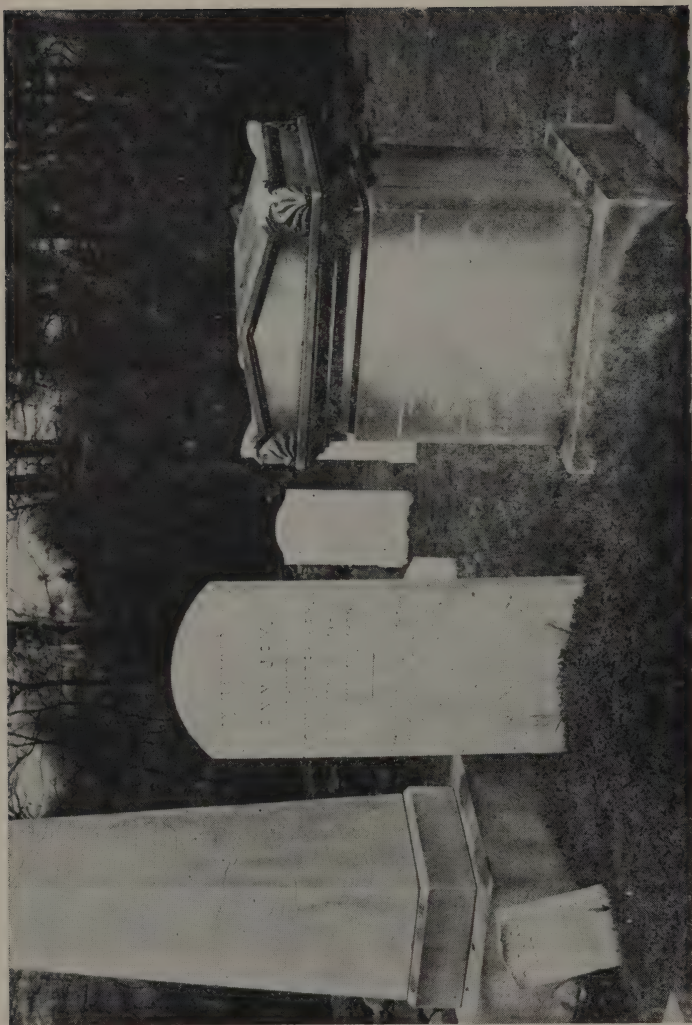
AMERICAN YACHT CLUB
*Erected in 1888. Destroyed
by fire in 1951.*



THE OLD ENGLISH LINDEN
The "Tree with the iron heart."



THE 26TH MILESTONE
Now in the wall at Christ's Church.



THE JAY FAMILY CEMETERY
Grave of John Jay at right.

wait on the Village Board and mention the fact, and so alert were they that they even reminded the Board that it had appropriated a sum to buy new ones and it had never been spent! If the approach to the railroad station needed beautifying the civic committee of the Lions would talk to the Garden Club and together they would see what could be worked out. Did Mrs. Ford offer prizes for the best window boxes on Rye merchants' shop fronts the Lions would help arouse interest in the project. They spent fifty dollars to repair a tennis court for the use of children, they sent baskets of food to poor families at Thanksgiving and Christmas, they gave a luncheon for our aviatrix, Ruth Nichols, and presented her with a trophy, they helped the Boy Scouts to finance a campaign, they heard of a blind woman who needed a radio and they attended to that matter. These are just some examples collected at random, but they go to show up the Lions Club — using that phrase in its complimentary sense.

Rye had two clubs now for garden enthusiasts, the long-established Garden Club and the Little Garden Club, composed of young women with small or beginning gardens. Both were eager for community service and played an increasingly active part in civic betterment. Whenever there was a movement afoot to beautify an approach to a public building or one of Rye's little parks at street intersections it was the Garden Club that was called on for advice or the actual carrying out of the project. It was the Garden Club's idea to hang flower baskets on the electric light poles in the business district. For years the senior club was the good fairy of the Rye Free Reading Room, decorating it twice a week with fresh flowers all through the blooming season. For thirty-two years it has performed this unique service. The members of the Little Garden Club also felt an affectionate interest in the Library and started in 1933 a project by which they maintained year-round cultivation and care of the plot in front of the building, and in addition they replanted and added new shrubs as it became necessary. For several years as holiday time drew near the clubs held a contest for the decoration of Christmas doorways, giving prizes for the most successful, and this made Rye homes lovely to see throughout the whole village. The good influence spread and the Board of Trade followed suit by awarding prizes for the best decoration of merchants' windows. In 1930 the Garden Club was conducting a week-

ly column of advice to gardeners in the *Chronicle* which continued for several years. In addition to all this the normal activities of garden clubs were carried on — annual flower shows in spring and fall for their own village, plant sales on the Green, entries not only in the International Flower show but in the Westchester and Fairfield County shows in Greenwich also, where, as we have said, they carried off innumerable prizes. Do not ask where they found the time to do all these things and still keep their gardens healthy and beautiful. No one knows, least of all, we imagine, the gardeners themselves. A final note: in 1938 the Garden Club celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. Twelve charter members who had been present at the first meeting at Mrs. William Rand's home in 1913 participated in the celebration.

The League of Women Voters continued its meetings regularly as late as 1936, but dropped out of the news for a time, perhaps lapsed for a year or two, for late in 1939 we find an item in the paper stating that it had just been reorganized.

The young men and boys of Rye, as we have seen, had in a measure come into their own in the '20's and both the "Y" and the Boy Scouts continued to flourish. Two matters of great moment occurred in the history of the "Y." On September 26, 1930, the gymnasium unit built by popular subscription was formally dedicated in an open meeting at which the local speakers were Theodore Fremd, the President of the "Y," and Livingston Platt, Mayor of Rye. The guest speaker was Bruce Barton. An adequate gymnasium more or less public in nature (for the "Y" was always generous with its facilities), was something new for Rye and it was soon being used to capacity. Business men had a night reserved for them, girls and women had it for a day every week, High School boys, who as yet had no gym, used it for basketball practice. Badminton, volley ball, fencing, boxing, wrestling, hand ball, all these burst into fresh life.

And now came for Secretary Cope and his boys the realization of a dream. In May, 1932, William J. Knapp who owned a beautiful property on the shores of Lake George offered to the "Y" a tract of woodland as a site for a summer camp. The story of how Pa Cope and his associates and his boys made Camp Mohican from scratch, so to speak, is an epic in itself. They started with a perfect

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site, a shack and two hundred and fifty dollars. They bought five tents, built five platforms for them, turned the shack into a dining room, built tables and benches, bought forty beds and mattresses, acquired a canoe and a rowboat. The next year they added, among other things, a hospital, a dining room to seat forty, four more canoes. The first two years were probably the hardest. They were also, probably, the most fun!*

The Boy Scout movement grew slowly in Rye, but by 1938 there were one hundred fifty boys in four troops. Two of these met at the High School, one sponsored by the Dad's Club the other by the Lions. One, the old, original Troop Two, still used Milton School as its base and the fourth was at the Resurrection School. Two events stand out in the Thirties. First was the organization of a "Ship" of Sea Scouts. Rye was a pioneer of Sea Scouting in Westchester County. From information supplied by George W. Herron we learn that the original "Ship" papers were signed at Milton School February 11, 1930, with Mr. Herron as Skipper. The "Ship" was named *Sakr-El-Bahr*, Arabic for "Sea Hawk." It was a twenty-four foot motor-sailer (less motor), acquired from the U.S. Navy, towed up from the Brooklyn Navy Yard to Milton Point, made seaworthy by the Sea Scouts and then moved to Scott's boat yard for fitting out. Sails donated by George Milne and E. A. Hodge were recut to plans drawn by Edward Leitch and a motor was installed at a later date at Cos Cob. Intensive training under sails and oars stirred such an interest all through Siwanoy Council that soon "Ships" were organized in several Sound villages and Mr. Herron was detached as Rye Skipper to head them all as Commodore. Yale Stevens, Jack Moxhay and Douglas Herron succeeded him as Skippers at Rye. The need for trained leaders led eventually to annual training cruises on which older Sea Scouts and leaders were given by the U. S. Coast Guard the use of a large schooner and practical training was given on ten-day, deep water cruises. Many Rye boys who served afloat in World War II got their first training for it in Sea Scouting at Rye.

The second important event in scouting was the

*In 1943 an anonymous donor gave the "Y" a new camp site on Lake George ten miles north of Camp Mohican consisting of five hundred acres of land with several buildings on it. It had formerly been owned by the New York YMCA and was ideally suited to its purpose. The equipment and some of the smaller buildings were moved here from the old camp.

financing and building of a log cabin on Manursing Way on land provided by the County Park Commission. For a group which had never had a real home of its own this furnished a wonderful center for meetings and ceremonies of all kinds and in the issues of the *Chronicle* for February, 1931, are photographs which tell the story. The cabin was known as Hoisington Lodge, so named in honor of Frederick R. Hoisington who had been active in getting it built and took great interest in it. Such good times were had here that it is particularly sad to think of the story's end — that one day it was found burned to the ground, an act of vandalism hard to forgive. Two years later the Scouts built another cabin, but this time at Camp Siwanoy, the County's Camp near Wingdale. The delightful camp in the woods had been too remote for safety.

In the fall of 1939 the name of one of Rye's Scouts made the headlines when Donn Fendler, lost on Mount Katahdin in Maine for eight days, living on berries and water, remembered his Boy Scout lessons of "Follow a stream and you're bound to come out." Sure enough, the Penobscot did bring him out to civilization, fifteen pounds lighter but alive, and he was given a great welcome when he came home to Rye. It would not be amiss to mention here another tribute to the training given to Scouts. This comes from Douglas G. Herron, a Rye boy who as a lieutenant in the Coast Guard in World War II led assault waves on hostile beaches at Casablanca, Sicily and the Marshalls. He once said, "The most valuable training I have had for this work was in Sea Scouting in Rye, New York."

When we go on to the story of the schools and churches in Rye during the thirties we realize that the great event in the school world, dwarfing everything else, was the completion of the new Central High School. To Messrs. Chapman and Woolsey of Rye fell the honor of being chosen as architects. It was decided to build the school of native stone quarried near Rye Lake. Ground was broken in July, 1930, and in September Theodore Fremd, President of the High School Board, laid the cornerstone. In the February 7, 1931, issue of the *Chronicle*, for the information of the public, (and still of interest today) appeared a concise history to date of the entire proposition regarding the school. On

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February 17, the \$1,100,000 initially appropriated having been found insufficient to finish the work and equip the athletic field, the taxpayers of the district, grumbling a little, went to the polls and voted \$325,000 more. The school was costing Rye something, but it was a plant to be proud of.

Classes started at 8:15 A.M. September 28, 1931, with an attendance of five hundred seventy-three pupils, exceeding all estimates, but the building was not formally dedicated until November, when, at a largely attended meeting Mr. Fremd accepted it from Mr. Chapman, Mr. Morehead making the principal address and Perley Lane, the new Principal, outlining in a thoughtful speech the policies of and hopes for the new school.

It would be interesting if space permitted to follow the fortunes of the school in its first years: to tell (we choose a few unrelated items) of the novel type of Commencement program initiated by Pierce McAloon and Don Brennan; of the unassuming but significant poetry reading festivals in which students from all over the county took part; of the occupational conferences; of honor that came to the school when Chase Schmidt won first prize in a country-wide examination sponsored by the League of Nations Association, a two months trip to Europe with all expenses paid, an honor, we might add, that has come to Rye High School more than once. And what a change in the size of the graduating classes now! Two seniors in the early 1900's, ninety-nine in 1936. It is relevant to note one more fact, namely that Rye was becoming increasingly college-conscious, and long lists began to appear in the paper in these years, listing the colleges to which the graduates would go in the fall.

Something should be said about the adult education work that was going on in the High School at this time, a very different project from that which had started back in the twenties under the supervision of the League of Social Service and the Board of Education. The original program had been a series of evening classes in which foreign born residents were taught to speak and write English and given a little background in American history and ways of life, and this had been extended to a few afternoon classes for women in their homes. In 1935 a group of forward-looking men and women organized the Rye Community Activities Group with the idea of starting a project like that being carried on in Maplewood, New Jersey, where an opportu-

ity was offered to grown-ups to meet together with a leader and follow up some activity in which they were mutually interested. This group got permission from the Board of Education to use the Central High School one evening a week. It was an entirely independent community enterprise, self supporting, and it went on most successfully until America's entry into the war — which soon took precedence over everything. These "activities" groups had, however, got off to a good start. They began to spring up all around. Scarsdale and Greenwich, among other neighboring towns, had found out what a need they filled and so widespread did the movement become that the State Education Department became interested and directly after the war set up a Bureau of Adult Education as an integral part of the public education system, implementing it with funds. As J. Edward Stratton who became Rye's first Director of Adult Education says, "Hobbies had become respectable." Anyone who looks at the program offered today can see how the idea has flourished here, and what a wide variety of interests are represented in the courses given.

With the establishment of an adequate athletic field and gymnasium sports began to occupy a much more prominent place in community life — and in the columns of the *Rye Chronicle*, where a whole page of sports news began to appear regularly. If Rye boys made records in a county-wide track meet (and they did) we were told of it. The four grammar schools held inter-school track meets that brought out wildly cheering parents from the whole village. It is not quite clear when the famous rivalry between Rye and Harrison started but start it did, and when in 1934 Rye won in baseball for the first time in three years joy was certainly unconfined.

If Rye had a new school to be proud of it had as well a beautiful new church. On May 18, 1930, the Catholics of Rye dedicated their Parochial School on Milton Road and laid the cornerstone of the Church of the Resurrection. Cardinal Hayes was the speaker, and his audience numbered not only Father Goggin's parishioners but a great many prominent non-Catholics of Rye who joined with their fellow townsmen in paying tribute to this fulfillment of many hopes. Colonel Wainwright and Theodore Fremd were among those who took part in the ceremonies.

A little less than a year later the first Mass in the new church was celebrated, on Easter Day, April 5, 1931, and

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on May 31st a solemn dedication service was conducted by Cardinal Hayes with over a thousand attending.

May 30, 1931, saw the dedication of the Firemen's Memorial, a monument erected in the triangle formed by the intersection of Grace Church Street and Milton Road. Its grave and dignified figure symbolizes "Memory," and on succeeding Memorial Days it has been the center at which firemen of Rye in an annual ceremony place their wreaths in memory of departed comrades, rather than at the graves of scores of firemen in widely separated cemeteries.

The YMCA's gymnasium, the High School and the Church of the Resurrection were the three notable achievements in Rye's building program but other additions and alterations were in progress. The Osborn Home and the United Hospital added large wings to their original buildings; the Rye Country Day School erected a new wing and a gymnasium; the Rye Playhouse closed for a month in order to install a new heating system and a larger screen and to improve their sound system; the parking problem there grew so great that it was decided to sacrifice the residence at the rear of the property and another old white house was demolished. One other landmark disappeared, the Rye Hotel on Purdy Avenue, which one of Rye's salty characters had kept in earlier days with his blacksmith shop in the rear. When Charles Gleason was approached about taking down the sign of the old Rye Station which was on his shop (for when the new station was built it had been moved over and converted into a smithy) he said he liked it that way.

The Rye Free Reading Room had its ups and downs in this decade, and unfortunately they did not synchronize for the ups were in *use* and the downs were in *income*. Because of the depression book borrowing soared and in 1933 reached a new high. In the same year the Village cut the library's appropriation five percent — and again in 1934, a cut never fully restored until 1943. Nevertheless the library managed one way and another and incidentally put on some of its most popular exhibitions, notably three in the series of "Home Talent" shows in which the diverse talents of Rye's artists and craftsmen were shown. In 1934 this appeal came out in the *Chronicle*: "Historically minded citizens of Rye are besought, not to say urged, to look in attics, safe deposit boxes, hollow trees, toes of stockings, on the living room walls, anywhere where they might find old photographs,

FIFTY YEARS OF RYE

maps, charts, deeds, anything at all that might help recreate the Rye of fifty years ago, or earlier, for the citizen of today." The occasion for this was the library's celebration of its fiftieth birthday, and the response was immediate and gratifying. When, on the appointed night, before a large gathering President W. Creighton Peet gave a most interesting history of the library which he had collected from the archives, and Mr. Henshaw talked about the books and reading of the early colonists, and Leonard Bacon, famous author and critic, entertained his listeners with witty and erudite remarks, the walls of the room were covered with a collection of memorabilia from old families in Rye that entertained visitors to the library for weeks afterward.

In 1938 the library received from the estate of Charles G. Strater a generous gift of several thousand dollars. It was the donor's wish that this be spent for the permanent enrichment of the collection of books of reference value for students and research workers. The Library already owned a small, well-chosen reference library but now, under the direction of W. Mitchell Van Winkle, a bibliophile and collector on the Board of Trustees, the collection began to grow rapidly, so much so that it soon became necessary to add more book space. Public appeal was made in June, 1939, for funds to build an addition. With numerous gifts from friends and supporters to which was added a bequest of \$2,500 from the estate of Justus A. B. Cowles, a former President of the library and gifts of \$1,000 each from Heathcote M. Woolsey, President of the Board and from Mrs. S. W. Howland, a Trustee of the Library, enough was raised to permit the erection of a small wing at the rear of the building. This was opened in October, 1940, and its completion made it possible to establish in another part of the library the Charles G. Strater Memorial Reference Room.

One other library matter, not purely local but of far reaching importance, occurred in this period. In April, 1938, library workers from all over the county met in White Plains and founded the Westchester Library Association in a move to promote better service for the public and to establish closer contact between library workers. Four or five libraries in this neighborhood, of which the Rye Free Reading Room was one, had been agitating this move for some time, and the all-important idea was to set up a Union Catalog and Inter-Library Loan System in order that readers

THE THIRTIES

might have access to the resources of all the libraries in the county, rather than those of their own community alone. This with WPA help was done and its subsequent operation has been of incalculable benefit to the county.

It should be said that in these ten years of which we write there was no lack of opportunity for Rye's seekers after education, culture and entertainment of all sorts. Famous names appear in the paper of men and women brought to Rye by various organizations — Christopher Morley, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Lowell Thomas, Fulton Sheen, Helen Keller, Wilmot Lewis, S. K. Ratcliffe, Eleanor Roosevelt, John Mason Brown, Gilbert Seldes, Herbert Agar among them. The Forum at the Presbyterian church became active now and secured for those interested in current affairs speakers qualified to discuss such questions as socialized medicine, the Soviet agrarian policy or the Italo-Ethiopian trouble. Children were not forgotten. Series of plays by Clare Tree Major's company and Adrienne Morrison's were given. The U.S. Army Band gave a concert, the Hampton Institute Choir, the Don Cossack Chorus; Dwight Newton and Alfred Thompson formed a Rye Symphony Society. The County Center was bringing to White Plains, only a step away, fine talent — Paderewski, Zimbalist, Percy Grainger and others.

And now one of Rye's major acts is waiting in the wings, but before it makes its entrance we must halt the performance for the solo act of an unheralded and unwelcome actor. *This* one had no name assigned by the Weather Bureau! On the morning of September 21, 1938, the weather report was "Rain and cool today." By afternoon New England — and Rye — were in the grip of one of the worst storms that a tropical hurricane ever brought to this section. Blind Brook rose fifteen feet over a normal high tide. Milton Road was hardest hit and there was real flood relief work carried on there, the kind that with fascinated incredulity you read about in the papers. Boats went out to rescue twenty families forced to leave their homes. Trees were uprooted, the Yacht Club pier smashed to bits, boats driven up in people's front yards, the lights went out at the United Hospital for ten minutes just as a baby was coming into the world and every candle in the place had to be rushed to the delivery room. It does not take much of a wind now to make people around here look about apprehensively, remembering not so much 1938, perhaps, as 1954.

VI

THE EARLY FORTIES

RYE has often been accused of being a little behind the times, slow-moving as compared with other suburban towns, over-proud of its "purely residential" status, clinging to its traditions, its old shops and houses and lamentably unprogressive manner. Still, every thirty or forty years the sleeper turns over, waks and becomes for a moment extremely ambitious — over-ambitious the neighbors say. This happened in 1904 when against the advice of these critics Rye undertook to become an incorporated village. It happened again in the late Thirties and early Forties when Rye determined to become a city.

On February 16, 1938, Mayor Platt appointed a Charter Commission. Its chairman was Charles P. Collins and the other members were Richard Barber, Daniel E. Kelly, Warren Ransom, Grenville Sewall and Walter E. Smith. The last-named resigned because of ill health and was replaced by Townsend Wainwright. For over two years, working on an average of two nights a week, these men labored over that charter, revising and again revising. No one can say how many times it was rewritten. In February, 1939, the statement was issued that a charter which had been many months in the making would be introduced in the Legislature before the end of the month, designed to become operative January 1, 1940. The benefits that city status would confer on Rye were outlined as follows:— first and foremost it would give Rye home rule; second, increased revenue from State sources, refunded income taxes and others, together with an approximately 40 per cent saving in the running of Town government; third, relief from paying a disproportionate share of the Town of Rye welfare tax (Rye was now paying approximately 40 per cent of this tax whereas the number of families on relief in

Rye was less than 10 percent); fourth, direct representation on the County Board of Supervisors.

Immediately a storm of protest against Rye's action arose. Port Chester, the Town of Rye's other village (a part of the village of Mamaroneck forming the only other unit) said Rye was seceding; Rye was unfairly refusing to bear its share of poor relief; Rye was rich and *ought* to bear a large share of its neighbor's burdens. In Rye, itself, as reflected in editorials and in letters from citizens printed in the paper, there was a chorus of approval and ardent hopes expressed that the charter bill would pass in the Legislature. At the current annual election a record vote was cast showing strong support of the Village Board. In the March 31 issue of the *Chronicle* were printed almost two and a half pages of a reply made by the members of the Charter Commission to the arguments advanced in Port Chester by opponents of the charter, each contention dealt with individually.

Rye did bend before the storm of criticism to the extent of offering, two months later as a compromise, to amend the charter in such a way that we would continue to pay our present share of the Town relief for three years and then for three years more at a graduated level, in order that Port Chester might make a gradual adjustment to the change.

The charter bill passed the Senate unanimously but was lost in the Assembly in the closing hours of the 1939 session, Supervisor Schmidt of Port Chester and Supervisor Taylor of Harrison having made a claim only a few days before that it was unconstitutional in that it affected the County Board of Supervisors and had never been submitted to them. In spite of this defeat Rye announced firmly that it was its intention to put the charter bill before the Legislature again at the opening of the next session.

Early in January, 1940, Mayor Platt reported to the Village Board that the charter had been sent to Albany, amended to include a promise of payment of Rye's share of the Town relief until 1947. By making this compromise he had been assured of the cooperation of Supervisor Schmidt in obtaining its approval by the Supervisors. The Board of Trustees of the Village of Port Chester still took a strong stand against the charter and at a meeting of the Board of Supervisors in February contended that it "was conceived in the spirit of class distinction and with a view to evasion rather than one hundred per cent cooperation in a moral

obligation." This attitude of the Port Chester Board did not seem, however, to be the sentiment of the electorate since in the Town election when the charter was a point at issue, Supervisor Schmidt, who was then favoring it had been re-elected by a large majority and at a public hearing later only one protest was received.

The opposition in the Board of Supervisors was based on the fact that Rye's becoming a city would mean the addition of another member to the Board, also that other towns and villages throughout the county might follow the example and thus weaken township control. However, with Mr. Schmidt's cooperation the bill was approved by the Board and that obstacle removed. The charter bill was passed by both houses in March and signed by Governor Lehman in April, 1940.

One might have thought that now all was clear sailing, but as a last ditch effort the Port Chester Village Board succeeded in June in getting enough signatures to compel a county referendum vote in the fall. The State Court of Appeals, however, in a test case ruled against this and at a special election held on July 30, 1940, Rye voted, 1206 strong, to become a city, the charter to become effective January 1, 1942.

It was emphasized during three months of debate that the new form of government implied no sweeping changes. The Board of Trustees would become the City Council, but its functions would be practically the same as before; Mayor and Council members would be elected as before, serving without salary; the Supervisor would be elected for a two year term and would sit in the Council but have no vote; the Treasurer's title would now be Comptroller. Other appointments would be made as before.

Other village affairs, while these important matters were being attended to, were not at a standstill even though the charter discussion did seem to loom large in every issue of the *Chronicle*. Flood control, zoning, sewer extension were all on the agenda. Ever since the 1938 hurricane the public concern over the continuing threat implicit in our innocent-seeming Blind Brook had become intensified. A thorough cleaning of the brook had been put through in 1939 and now the Board's attention was directed to the

pond on Bowman Avenue at the northern end of our territory and a considerable sum was expended to buy it, clean it out and build a dam to hold the flood waters. This proved a somewhat disappointing project and one which the Mayor said would be an effective control only in moderate conditions of flooding. The matter of flood control was still to be solved. Several zoning changes were effected. One was in a section where residents had become alarmed over the prospect of too many small houses being built and this was rezoned so as to be divided into lots not smaller than one third of an acre. Application was made to build a garden type of apartment between Theall Road and Railroad Avenue, and when approved resulted in the attractive Country Gardens Apartments. With WPA paying about two thirds of the cost a bond issue of \$150,000 was voted in 1940 to cover the cost of sewer extension to districts badly in need of improvement. This would be a two-year job at the very least, probably longer.

And now, beginning with murmurs, gradually swelling to completely audible voices and then to a crescendo, began a series of complaints on that old familiar topic—the parking situation on Purchase Street. This time there were endless ramifications, it was not confined to parking alone. Finally the Civic Committee of the Woman's Club published an eight-point program for civic betterment which included, among other points, establishing a municipal parking lot, allowing only one-hour parking on the main street and improving the street by the abolition of poles and wires, regulation of signs and awnings, planting trees and so on.

There seemed to be a generally—and genuinely—disturbed feeling abroad not about Purchase Street's appearance alone but about the whole village, so much so that a largely attended public meeting was held at which people were invited to express their opinions and make their suggestions as to action. Rye came in for some rather harsh words and the Mayor expressed himself as disturbed to hear Rye run down. Referring to the Woman's Club program he told the meeting that the Village Board had already discussed all these points long ago but that the expense involved was too great to be incurred at this time. Possibly more heat than light was generated by this discussion, at any rate the matter was left in abeyance for the time being, to be taken up again, as we know, a few years later in a much more ambitious program than ever before undertaken.

There was no contest in the general election of November, 1941, for the new city officers. Mayor Platt and his entire Board were re-elected and on January 1, 1942, Rye became a City.

The first meeting of the City Council on New Year's Day, 1942, being an historic occasion a crowd of citizens filled the room to capacity and overflowed into adjoining rooms. Two former Mayors were present, Theodore Fremd and J. Motley Morehead, Colonel J. Mayhew Wainwright to whom Rye owes so much, and many former members of the Board of Trustees. All listened with interest to Mayor Platt's speech in which he drew attention to the fact that we had been specially honored, for only in the case of seven other municipalities in the state had the status of city been granted to a unit as small as ours; that the rights to govern ourselves as a city were far greater than those permitted to a village; that we must bear our share of state and county taxes and until 1947 help care for the needy of the Town of Rye, but with these two exceptions we were henceforth masters of our own financial destiny; finally that the Council was going to try to carry on the government as far as possible along village lines and that while it was an experiment in municipal government built on non-political lines he thought it could be made to work. At the close of the meeting Julian B. Beaty presented Mayor Platt with a bronze plaque of the new seal of Rye inscribed with the affectionate regards of his fellow trustees. Mr. Platt had worked long and hard for this day and amply deserved the title which Grenville Sewall bestowed on him — "Father of the City Charter."

The *Rye Chronicle* was due to publish on the 2nd of January and that issue turned out to be an extremely special number. Not only did it contain a good account of the first meeting of the Council but it was fully illustrated. One picture showed the Council members seated around their table and another the Council and all the City officials and employees grouped together. There were pictures of all Rye's Presidents and Mayors from William H. Parsons down to the present, a fine view of the Square House, and in addition the full text of Mr. Platt's speech was given, as well as a history of the charter by Charles P. Collins, chairman of the Charter Committee, a history of the physical growth of Rye from village to city by John Ehler, Village Engineer, an account of the financial structure of the city by Joseph

A. Hannan, Treasurer, a history of the Board of Trustees, giving its whole personnel from 1904 to the present, prepared by William H. Selzer, Village Clerk, and the congratulatory messages that had been received from Governor Lehman, from our Assemblyman and Senator and the Mayors of neighboring villages.

On the *Chronicle's* masthead appeared for the first time Rye's new city seal. When the question of an official seal arose it was decided to have artists submit designs in competition for a prize of one hundred dollars. The design of George H. Snowden of New York was chosen. It is oval in shape, one of the favorite design forms of colonial times. In the center is a ship copied from the obverse of the seal of Rye, England. It has a furled mainsail and raised towers in bow and stern with a sun and moon above the yard. At the left is the date, 1660, when the first settlers landed on Manursing Island, with which is combined an Indian peace pipe. At the right the date, 1904, refers to the year Rye was incorporated as a village, and with it is combined the torch of progress. Below is given Rye's date as a city, 1942.

At this time all officials and employees were reappointed and the personnel of the new government was as follows:—

Councilmen

Julian B. Beaty, Acting Mayor
William H. Graham
Robert P. Hughes
George M. Langeloh
Frederick K. Lister
Grenville S. Sewall
C. Russell Lea, Supervisor

Comptroller Joseph A. Hannan
Corporation Counsel Daniel E. Kelly
City Engineer John A. Ehler
Assessor William A. P. Phipps
City Judge William N. Edwards
Assistant City Judge Roger Sherman
City Planning Commission

Charles P. Collins, Chairman
James M. McCullough, Frederick A. Godley,
Robert P. Hughes, Daniel E. Kelly

Board of Appeals

Dean Clark, Chairman

William J. Demorest, Eugene M. Foley, George

L. Henderson, Roger Sherman

This is the story of a very small city in a very large world. While events which seemed quite important to us were happening the large world was falling apart. Ten months earlier than the day on which Rye voted to become a city, on the morning of Friday, September 1, 1939, Hitler's army marched into Poland. That day went by, Saturday as well. On Sunday a quiet, sad, tired voice came over the radio from London. It said:

"This morning the British ambassador in Berlin handed to the German government a final note stating that unless we heard from them by eleven o'clock that they were preparing at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you that no such undertaking has been received, and in consequence this country is at war with Germany."

In *The Big Change* Frederick Allen writes, "Yet still the majority of Americans, despite the nightmare change that they were witnessing across the seas, remained stubbornly reluctant to commit themselves; their neutralism died hard. It was not until France fell and Britain stood alone, confronting the prospect of 'blood, toil, tears, and sweat,' that their sense of the implacable necessities of the new situation began really to overcome their suspicion that somebody must be putting something over on them."

In June, 1940, France collapsed and the United States began to think of its own defense. No one disagreed on that point. By autumn the draft law was in operation. In 1941 we saw Britain being bombed, the Balkans and Russia invaded. On a black Sunday afternoon in December all doubts were at an end. We no longer had any choice.

Rye had not waited until after Pearl Harbor to throw herself heart and soul into the war effort, just as she had in 1914. By March, 1940, appeals had been answered coming from the American Friends of France, the Finnish War Relief and the British War Relief. By the end of June the campaign by the Rye Branch of the Red Cross to raise \$5,000 for war relief had been started and a Red Cross workroom for surgical dressings and refugee sewing had

been opened on Purchase Street. A committee representing American-French War Relief had been formed to raise money for two ambulances to be sent to France. (With the fall of France it was decided to send them to England instead, for fear they would fall into German hands.) Early in July a group of women organized a British War Relief Committee, opened an office at 39 Purchase Street where wool for knitters could be distributed, and a work room in the Rye Country Day School for sewing and surgical dressings. This committee functioned until June, 1945 and then disbanded, but only at the request of the British who thought that other countries were in greater need.

The tension grew as America came to realize that only England stood in Hitler's path. The Lend-Lease Act went through, and we began convoying English ships part way to England. The idea of an invaded America was a very strange one for us to envision but the terrific rise of air power and its position in the scheme of things as compared with World War I changed the picture. The Selective Service Act passed in the early autumn of 1940. Draft Board 750 was set up in Mamaroneck for this district and Dean Clark on the Draft Board and Frederick A. Godley on the Advisory represented Rye.

On January 10, 1941, Benjamin Petrizzi, Leonard Mainiero and Daniel Colasanto left their home town to learn the ways of war, the Lions Club giving them a big send-off. After this almost every week a new list of names of inductees appeared in the paper. For a long time all the men left from Mamaroneck station but Rye made a suggestion that it be arranged so that they should alternate the point of departure. Late in November, 1942, for the first time a quota left from Rye. After a meeting held in the High School auditorium they were driven to the station by the Red Cross Motor corps, preceded by police and the High School band. The news report said that there were two thousand there to see them off. These demonstrations were the expression of a quite natural and understandable feeling but one wonders if it was not a little hard on the inductees. How many times have we been told that this was not a flag-waving, band-playing, soldier-singing war, not a crusade as in 1914 — but a grim job to be done as quickly as possible and to get home from, if one could.

What about the home fires? As early as December 13, 1940, a Westchester Council for National Defense had

been organized with J. Mayhew Wainwright heading it, and in February, 1941, a Village of Rye Defense Committee headed by Roger Sherman had been appointed to work in conjunction with the County Committee. *National Civil Defense* did not start until May 20, 1941, so we were no laggards. From now on for four long years Rye was to eat, drink, wake, sleep with war. A look at the *Rye Chronicle* for these years bears out this statement. The too young and the too old to fight threw themselves into Civil Defense, Red Cross and other relief work, fund-raising, salvage, — anything and everything that would give them a sense of contributing to the great mass effort to defeat Germany, and later, Japan.

Civil Defense was strongly organized in Rye. At a Board meeting on August 26, 1941, the Mayor appointed Warren A. Ransom as Civil Defence Commissioner with Mrs. F. A. Godley as Deputy Commissioner to relate the work of the women of the department. They were to work with the local Defense Committee and the Board of Trustees. Mayor Platt, of course, was the Chief Executive Defense Officer of the Village. When city government started on January 1, 1942, it was necessary to make some reorganization and at that time the Council of Defense of the Village was dissolved and a Council of Defense of the City of Rye appointed. It consisted of the Mayor as Chairman, the Members of the Common Council, the Commissioner of Civil Defense and Roger Sherman, former Chairman of the Village Council.

There were many divisions to start functioning, among them Air-raid Protection, Evacuation, Public Works, Health, Auxiliary Police and Auxiliary Firemen. Residents were registered in a voluntary vocational survey seeking to determine any and all skills that might be useful in an emergency. Forty women representing twenty-one women's organizations in Rye organized as a Rye branch of the American Women's Volunteer Services to work under the Defense Council, and soon under trained leaders classes were formed in nutrition, first aid, home nursing and motor-mechanics.

The air raid Wardens took their responsibilities seriously and spent many long hours patrolling their assigned areas. The Report Center at the Police Station was for a long time manned by volunteers on four hour shifts and there was never an hour day or night when two people were not at

the telephones ready to answer a call. Soon black-out practice began and simulated "incidents". Representing one school of thought the Westchester Lighting Company came out with a large illustrated advertisement showing "how to black out windows and still enjoy normal lighting" and adjured us not to turn out all the lights for fear of the effect on the children, while on the other hand Civil Defense sternly bade us have a special black-out room and not let a ray of light be seen from the outside. We seem to remember that citizens used their judgment and there were varying degrees of compliance, but in the main people were cooperative and only a hint from the warden sufficed.

Careful preparations were made for the emergency of a possible mass evacuation of New York. The schools estimated they could care for 2,500, the churches 100 each, the YMCA 600, so that if bombs had fallen on New York we could have sheltered 3,500 refugees.

The Auxiliary Police and Auxiliary Firemen would have constituted a most valuable force had need arisen. Several hundred men were enrolled and drilled in these branches of Civil Defense.

On the Fourth of July, 1942, Civil Defense paraded through the streets of Rye some thousand strong and Rye was able to see for the first time what its preparations really were. A motion picture was made of the parade and shown soon after at the Playhouse, a very special showing for which no admission was charged—in money. Amusingly enough it happened to be held just as the campaign for "sleeping rubber" was in progress and patrons were told to bring rubber as entrance fee. So when the day came, in the lobby of the theatre instead of the spot light falling, as in most "first showings" on prominent movie stars adorned with orchids, it shone on patriotic citizens laden with rubber mats, bathing caps, hot water bottles, fly swatters, kewpie dolls and old garden hose. It was a grand picture and the little theatre resounded with cries of "Oh, look! There's Dad!" and "What did I tell you? That's Sis in the first row!"

Civil Defense is not the whole story. Remember all the other ways in which people were working for the war. Think of the Victory gardeners. In 1942 intensive courses in practical gardening were being given at the High School and the next year hundreds of individual gardens were under cultivation and there was a community plot of four

and a half acres back of Milton Road broken down into sixty small lots allocated to families. In the fall the Kiwanis Club and Civil Defense sponsored a Victory Garden competition with prizes for the best. Think of the salvage drives. In 1941 came the great aluminum campaign, 1300 pounds from Rye and forty tons of old pots and pans, ice trays, cocktail shakers, washing machine parts and what not collected in the county. "Sleeping rubber" came the next year and the Boy and Girl Scouts did a fine job on that. The Rye Golf Club ripped up its rubber floor runners in locker rooms, "more than eight men could carry." And fat for explosives! What housewife can forget how she laboriously tried out cooking fat and carried it down to the butcher shop?

All sorts of cunning schemes were thought up to keep people on their toes. "Remember!" they said, "An old flat-iron can make two steel helmets or thirty hand grenades. A set of old golf clubs equals metal for a thirty caliber machine gun." Sectional drives were instituted for scrap metal. Which would bring in the most, Ryegate or Hix Park? Hardly anything was safe from the children's acquisitive eyes, they were so eager to acquire merit for their street. The Playhouse cooperated nobly. A popular picture would be announced. "Money will not admit you," the directors would say, "but five pounds of scrap metal (or rubber or rags) will." And the theatre and the film would be donated by the management. Who can forget "Jungle Jewelry Day"? The word had gone around that American soldiers in jungle outposts found out that the natives would do anything for bright baubles with plenty of glitter. They would dig trenches, carry the wounded — anything. So for a certain performance admission was based on jewelry and the children brought an unbelievable number of pieces of glitter, nor was it all costume jewelry from Woolworth's, for their mothers had risen to the occasion and raided old boxes for unworn rings and pins and strings of beads.

Rye had two war industries. One was located at the Milton Boat Yards where Edgar John and Associates in two years grew from a personnel of seventy-five workmen to over six hundred. Mayor Sewall took occasion once to compliment Mr. John on the management of the Yard saying that the conduct of the men in this large working force had been exemplary, their support of war loans and local charities most generous — and there had been no

THE EARLY FORTIES

strikes! The Navy had been well served. 246 boats had been built here, patrol boats, tow boats, cargo barges; thousands of tent poles made; and many shipments of war materiel packed and sent. The other small industry was located at the shop of Brailsford & Co., makers of precision instruments. This firm developed and manufactured meteorological instruments for the government.

There was not one organization, not one little group of people who did not go all out in the great effort to lighten the burden of war for the active participants — the fighting men.

In the forefront, as always, was the Rye Unit of the American Red Cross. Going into action long before the United States entered the war it simply stepped up its pace after Pearl Harbor. It worked, of course, hand in hand with the Disaster Division of Rye's Civil Defense; it established classes in First Aid and Home Nursing; from its work-room it shipped out surgical dressings and knitted articles that in numbers reached what it is no exaggeration to call astronomical figures. Few Red Cross workers sat at home with hands idle in these years. Men — and non-knitting women — observed with awe that knitters could not only knit and talk, but could knit and *read* at the same time. It has never been *proved* that they could not knit and sleep! Women of the Red Cross Motor Corps did a Herculean job. Among their duties were the pick-up and delivery of finished products for shipment to both the armed forces and civilian relief centers; the transport of wounded to and from hospitals, rest centers and Navy bases; the turn-out at any moment on orders from the Office of Civil Defense. They were on duty or on call twenty-four hours no matter what the weather. With the end of the war, far from a surcease in activity came almost a redoubling of work. Rye's unit was now called the United Shore Unit because it served Rye, Harrison, Port Chester and Purchase. In addition to the duties described above came the driving of the wounded from hospitals to their homes; driving for the Pawling Convalescent Home in which Rye had a special interest; driving canteen workers to La Guardia; collecting and transporting thousands of books for camps here and abroad. They transported gallons of milk to the army pier at Camp Shanks where men on incoming transports were avid for fresh milk of which there was a complete lack in Europe. These women would often go on duty at 2 A.M.

and work straight through until 3 P.M. or later, the following day.

One of the Red Cross services too often overlooked — an outstanding one — was known as the "Home Service." Through this when some emergency occurred and a message could not be sent to a service man through ordinary channels the Red Cross with its wide-reaching facilities could often reach him. In reverse, a soldier in anxiety over family matters could get in touch with his home through the good offices of a Red Cross worker. A book could be written on this one phase of service alone.

The annual drives for funds to carry on this tremendous work were, naturally, far beyond those of peace time. Rye exceeded its quotas every year as this small tabulation will show.

	Quota	Subscribed
1943	\$28,000	\$33,409
1944	44,500	50,039
1945	44,500	53,103
1946	22,250	36,043
1947	11,125	26,554

Few of the participants will have forgotten "War Relief Day" on May 14, 1941, when the Garden Clubs staged a benefit for the Red Cross and the British War Relief. By a special dispensation from its Trustees the Rye Library building was turned over to the club women for the day, while the Village Trustees gave them carte blanche on the Village Green. In the Library were beautiful competitive flower arrangements (including those of school children) and horticultural exhibits. Outside on the Green a huge plant sale was conducted. Commercial exhibits were invited, Rye florists took part and the Book Shop had on sale a table of books on gardening. Certain houses and gardens of club members were opened to visitors and a dollar buffet luncheon was served at Christ's Church. A picturesque touch was added in the person of a Scots piper who, with kilt flying, strode up and down in order that if there were any citizens who could not *see* that something out of the ordinary was happening on the Green they could at least hear it and pay attention. And what person with a drop of Scottish blood could be unmoved when he heard played "The Flowers of the Forest"?

Mention has been made of the outstanding work done by the British War Relief chapter whose members not only

conducted a work room where every scrap of material contributed was turned into some wearable garment by the deft hands of Mrs. William Ramsay and her helpers, but in addition ran a tea room and served luncheons to earn money for their cause.

There were campaigns for funds and benefit performances for United China Relief, for Greek War Relief and June 20-27, 1942, was proclaimed by the Mayor, Russian War Relief Week. To all these causes Rye contributed generously.

In 1942 a Rye Unit of the Citizens' Committee for the Army and Navy was formed with Mrs. Eugene Watson and Elia O'Day as co-chairmen. This group raised over \$17,000 by gifts and entertainments and sent out five thousand knitted garments as well as hundreds of books. An outstanding feature of their work were the Christmas boxes sent each year to Rye's service men no matter where stationed. The scores of letters received in acknowledgment of these were in the summer of 1943 placed in the Rye Free Reading Room and exhibited there together with a large collection of photographs of servicemen lent to the library by their families. This exhibit was one of the most popular ever shown, and while open for only five days attracted over five hundred visitors. The letters were placed in scrap books and may still be seen at the library.

A group that made quite a name for itself was the Heather Club. This was a small group of women of Scottish descent whose members made knitted garments but whose special contribution consisted of hundreds of cartons of cigarettes sent to Rye men — and most gratefully received. And toward the end of the war a branch of American Relief for France was established to work in cooperation with the New York City center, sewing, knitting and collecting clothing. The temptation to quote from some of these letters from abroad received by the various organizations has been resisted but just one from a Frenchwoman must be allowed: "We thank you very much as we have been bereft of all our linen, furniture and other belongings. This is not gay at our age — 63 and 69 — after working all our lives."

All the clubs in Rye would have to be mentioned if we were to do full justice to their part in the war. We should have to tell how the Woman's Club took out of storage its club furniture and furnished two rooms in the U.S. Air Force's convalescent Home at Pawling and then begged

radios, phonographs and records, games and other recreational equipment for it; how the Business and Professional Women's Club members worked all day and then went to the Red Cross workroom and made surgical dressings at night; how the Apawamis Club raised big sums with benefit tournaments, and — but it is impossible to tell it all here.

Yet we must mention briefly the work done by the school children. Practically every one of them was enrolled in the Junior Red Cross. They made afghans and washcloths, dart boards, collected playing cards, sold bonds in War Loan drives, collected salvage. High School boys in their shop work made twelve library book-wagons for the Red Cross. And we are told that the cost of the materials for all these articles was borne by the children themselves.

Let us end with one of the most imaginative enterprises of all, and one that must have been a source of great pleasure to our Rye boys. This was the *Rye News Letter*, an inspiration of the Lions Club. Compiled by a staff of editors under the direction of William Dornbusch it gave warmly and informally news of the city, a column on sports and items about service men, where they were and what they were doing. It occupied an entire page of the *Chronicle* where it was printed in full. Hundreds of copies were made and one was sent to every soldier. Five issues were printed in 1944 and one or two additional ones the following year and the entire expense of printing and mailing was borne by the Club.

Rye had a distinguished record in World War I for campaigns for funds and war loans. She equalled it in this war. Time after time it seemed as though the bottom of the barrel must have been scraped — time after time the quota would be oversubscribed.

The first campaign came in 1941, in May, when the Selective Service Act had been in force long enough for America to have thousands of men in training camps. It was for the United Service Organizations whose function it was to maintain service clubs adjacent to the camps. Rye's quota was only \$2,000 — a flea bite to what was to come later. The next appeal was a different matter. On December 11, a matter of days after Pearl Harbor, Mayor Platt issued an official proclamation stating that the Red Cross announced the need of a War Emergency Fund of \$50,000,000 of which our share was \$13,000 to be raised immediately. This was oversubscribed. In May

the U.S.O. asked for \$5,000.

And now began the War Loans, eight of them before the end came. These were conducted by the Treasury Department, but with local appointees as chairmen. We were reminded that we were only *lending*. "*We lend our money; they give their lives!*" Absolutely final figures on the total subscribed by Rye citizens in the War Bond campaigns are not available, but a statement in the *Chronicle* of Dec. 28, 1945 that \$8,800,000 was subscribed is probably not far from the figure. To give an idea of how it worked out—Rye's quota in the Second War Loan was \$475,000. Rye subscribed \$1,058,634. In the Sixth the quota was \$900. Rye invested \$1,706,493.

These are large figures. For contrast we should like to mention here that on one day while all this was going on Alan Kelley, a boy of eleven, came to Milton School staggering under the weight of a sugar sack in which were three years savings—3,750 pennies. He was proud to buy his first fifty dollar war bond.

It should be remembered that while in the years between 1941 and 1945 Rye was lending millions to the government it was also supporting the Red Cross and U.S.O. as well as its own Community Chests, and in 1943-4-5 there were included in the Chest quotas, contributions to the National War Fund covering anywhere from 17 to 22 agencies. Instead of appeals for perhaps \$46,000 or \$50,000 to which Rye had become accustomed, the quota for the Community Chest in 1943 was \$78,250. Out of each dollar 35 cents was to go to the National War Fund. In 1944 and 1945 the quotas were \$76,925 and \$77,525, respectively. All of these were oversubscribed.

A campaign for books, not money, was put on in January, 1942. The first Victory Book Campaign was sponsored by the U.S.O., the Red Cross and the American Library Association. Marcia Dalphin, local librarian, was appointed Director of the Campaign and James S. McCulloh and Alexander Walker represented the Red Cross and U.S.O. Again Rye did more than it was asked. We were supposed to send a thousand books. In three weeks we had collected two thousand and more than three thousand were eventually sent. Everyone helped. A committee was made up which included the head of every major organization in the city. The Bowery Savings Bank donated the use of an empty store, collection depots were set up in strategic spots, schools,

clubs and individuals deluged us with books. The Boy and Girl Scouts and the Motor Corps helped in the collection, merchants gave cartons, a picked staff sorted and packed the books and finally the S. H. Graham Company solved the difficult problem of their transportation to the points designated by the National Committee, giving their service without charge. In 1943 a second drive got under way and nearly 3,000 more books were shipped out.

Just as we thought that campaigns were a thing of the past the two National Clothing Drives in 1945 and 1946 were organized. 24,000 units of clothing were gathered in the first one, and in the second with a quota of 10,000 we collected 29,000, nearly three times what we were asked.

It could not have been an easy task nor a happy one to edit a country weekly in these war years. Not that material was lacking. The problem must have been, rather, that of selection and arrangement, for the news was from so many sources and so varied in character. In addition to covering the activities of all these groups of war workers there were such continuing features as a column of advice on gardening for the benefit of Victory Gardeners, and on "Food for the Duration," how to feed one's family under war scarcities; people must be kept informed on changes in rationing, on fuel shortages and gasoline rulings; there were countless matters that have no place in peace time existence. And more and more often, as time went on, interspersed among these news items that reflected the ceaseless, nervous activity of the home front, readers' eyes fell on those paragraphs that stabbed to the very heart of someone — your neighbor, perhaps, or the family on the next block, if not nearer still. "Lt. (j.g.) ————— reported missing; Pfc. ————— killed in action at Okinawa." The accounts of heroism and sacrifice, of citations and decorations won by our men helped to mitigate our griefs and there was scarcely an issue in which these did not appear.

If this brief account of the war years seems to dwell upon what was happening in Rye rather than on the fighting front it is, of course, because it is of that that we have first hand knowledge. The other side of the story is now in the history books. People were often generous about sharing with *Chronicle* readers letters they had received from the front for they knew how precious any word from there was. Sometimes the letter would tell of encountering in the most unexpected place a fellow-townsmen, and of the interchange

THE EARLY FORTIES

of news that would follow. There was a fascinating account one week of how Colonel Davidson paid a surprise visit to his two sons, one a Major in the Marines, the other a Gunner's Mate in the Pacific, and of how he shared a foxhole on Iwo Jima with the gunner son. In 1945 the *Chronicle* published a series of letters from Thomas Lufkin of the Marine Corps giving vivid descriptions of his experiences in Guam and Japan.

The war was drawing to its close. In the spring of 1945 it was possible to open an offensive against Germany. In April the news of President Roosevelt's death shocked the world. He did not live to see the setting up of the United Nations at San Francisco that very month. By early May Mussolini had died ignominiously and Hitler had not waited for his enemies to seize him. May 8th, 1945, Germany surrendered. Events moved fast. In three more months the war in the Pacific was over. On the sixth of August the United States assumed the fearful responsibility of being the first to use the atom bomb and on August 14 President Truman announced the surrender of Japan.

The people of Rye gathered in their churches to give thanks that the war had ended and Sunday was proclaimed a day of prayer and thanksgiving and was so observed in all the churches.

Rye had had over fourteen hundred men and women in the services from first to last, and forty-four had made the supreme sacrifice. On December 6, 1942, a year to the day after Pearl Harbor, Rye's Honor Roll was set up on the Green opposite the War Memorial of World War I, bearing at that time six to seven hundred names. It was unveiled by Colonel J. M. Wainwright and Roger Sherman. Mayor Platt opened the dedication ceremonies and the Rev. John D. Gregory made the address.

VII

THE LAST DECADE

1945-1954

THIS chronicle of Rye's fifty years since its incorporation, covering roughly the first half of the 20th century, begins with 1945 its last decade. Starting with Rye as a small village of three thousand people it ends with it as a city of four times that number. The outstanding event of the decade was the carrying out of a long delayed project in city planning, a milestone in Rye's history. There is included as well some account of the radical changes in the school system and brief mention of the progress of various institutions and organizations prominent in the life of the community.

The closing months of 1945 found Rye beginning to shut up shop as far as the war was concerned. Civil Defense had disbanded officially on June 20, not long after V-J Day. The Control Room manned for three years by volunteers was on December 6 turned over to the Police Department. No tears were shed when it came time to dismantle the Ration Board office. The list of items going off ration lists had begun to grow appreciably longer now although there was still some caution in official statements. — "Meat *might* be eased by October 1, nylons by Thanksgiving; shoes could be expected by October 1 and 3,000,000 radios by Christmas; Sugar — prospects dim till 1946."

When the office closed in October it was deemed fitting to have a party and well had those much tried workers deserved one. They had weathered the same storm of criticism from disgruntled citizens that their co-workers all over the land had met. The office manager, Ellen Gainey, and all her staff were heartily commended by Mayor Platt and Roger Sherman, Chairman of the OPA, who attended the ceremonies, and special praise was given the teachers in the public and private schools who had worked so faithfully at this thankless task.

It was stated earlier that the activities of the women of the Red Cross Motor Corps did not end with the cessation of hostilities. In point of fact they are still going on. Anyone who wishes to read a full report of how this courageous, hard-working group of Rye women served their country during the war years will find it in an article by Lt. Elsie Corning in the *Rye Chronicle* of June 28, 1946.

Now the demobilized service men and women were coming home, a few at a time, and the problems of adjustment and absorption into civil life were ahead. Our veteran's service was organized under the County and the Westchester County Veterans' Service Agency in White Plains was directed by Guthrie Shaw of Rye. A Deputy Director was appointed for Rye but the county continued to assist the city in every possible way. One of the most pressing problems was housing, and one wonders if many a man may not have looked at the sign, "Welcome Home" over the Square House door and said to himself, "That's all very well, but just where is the home?" In February the Mayor appointed a Veteran's Housing Committee to work with the Common Council in an effort to solve this problem and it was decided that with State assistance it might be possible to convert St. Benedict's Home into quarters for veterans and their families. This project dragged on for months but eventually nearly a hundred families were established in the main building and in reconstructed barracks and were able to stay there until May, 1954, when the owners of the property after having granted several extensions of the lease declared themselves unable to do so again and the few families still in residence were forced to vacate.

We have seen how in the early forties, before the war began to absorb every energy, concern had been growing over conditions in Rye's business district, and how at a public meeting much dissatisfaction had been expressed. Truth to tell Rye had been growing somewhat haphazardly for its first two hundred fifty years. As early as 1921 civic planning had made a start and a planning board had been appointed. In 1929 a firm of consulting engineers had been retained and had brought in recommendations, but then came the market crash and retrenchment. In 1937-38 constructive ideas were advanced but it was not until Rye became a city that the

old planning board was reconstituted as the Rye Planning Commission and made a permanent department of our government. In January, 1943, Mayor Platt appointed Arthur W. Packard Chairman of the Commission and as his associates Malcolm Fooshee, Robert P. Hughes, James M. McCullough, Raymond W. Murphy and Alfred R. Thomas.

Mayor Platt having announced toward the close of 1942 his intention to retire fifteen months later when his term expired, resigned a little earlier than that but remained on the Council in order to finish some undertakings in which he had a special interest. Julian Beaty was appointed Mayor to finish out Mr. Platt's term. In the November, 1943 election Grenville S. Sewall was chosen Mayor and began his term of office on January 1, 1944.

In Mayor Sewall's first report to the Council he drew attention to the fact that in spite of the war some major accomplishments had been effected in the year just past. The Planning Commission, he said, had undertaken the preparation of a master plan for the city, keeping in mind the preservation of existing real estate values and Rye's strong desire to maintain its residential status, but looking forward to improvements in the business section and in the parking situation. It would soon be ready, together with a proposed capital budget looking toward a six year program starting in 1945. For nine months, he said, the Citizen's Commission appointed to study the question of school consolidation had been at work and would soon submit a report.

When the Mayor said in his report that the Planning Commission's statement would soon be ready he was perhaps over-optimistic. As a matter of fact it was not made public until June, 1946, when, at a meeting of citizens and heads of civic groups, the plan was fully described and a handsomely illustrated brochure entitled "On Our Way" was made available. The speakers at this meeting were Livingston Platt who was Mayor at the time the plan was conceived, Arthur Packard, former Chairman of the Commission, to whose unremitting labors the Plan owed more than to any other one man, Leonard Harrison, his successor as head of the Commission, and Councilman Robert P. Hughes, a member of the Commission.

The Rye Development Plan, as it was called, was the result of nearly three years work by a committee of thirty-six citizens, seven technical consultants and the City Council. (Because of pressure of other duties Mr. Packard had been

compelled to resign in January, 1946 and Leonard Harrison had been appointed Chairman). In brief, that part of the plan which was designed to improve the business section envisioned the shutting off of Purchase Street between Purdy Avenue and Locust Avenue as a motor highway, and substituting a grassed-over mall intersected with frequent cross-walks so that pedestrians might walk safely from shop to shop with no danger from traffic. A traffic loop was planned starting at the railroad station and the areas behind Purchase Street stores were to be cleared for off-street parking with access to the shops by rear entrances. Parking facilities would also be provided at the station. The aim was to do away entirely with curb parking.

In this plan as outlined in a thirty-four page booklet there were, of course, many more projects than the improvement of the business area. This, however, was given priority. Such plans as were advanced for a community recreation field, five playfields, a brook trailway, a park, street extensions and about fifteen projects involving sewers, storm drains and paving must wait until later.

The Rye Development Plan attracted immediate attention in the New York press. The *New York Times*, and the *New York Sun* had extremely commendatory editorials and an article appeared in the *Architectural Forum*. Station WJZ sent a representative to Rye and a program was recorded in which the plan was described. At home in Rye, however, mutterings began to be heard. The Planning Commission anticipating the need for explanation immediately appointed a Committee on Public Information and invited organizations to hold meetings at which fully informed representatives would discuss the Plan and answer any questions. For months the plan was the subject for discussion wherever one went. To cut a long story short, on November 5, 1946, a referendum was held in which two propositions were submitted to the voters. One for a bond issue of \$600,000 for construction of parking areas, the other for \$540,000 to buy property for such areas. Both were defeated. The plan had perhaps been too revolutionary for quick agreement. People, on second thought, found that they rather liked what the Plan alluded to as "the present motley appearance of the store fronts" and the idea of "grass on the main street" which some opponents of the plan seized upon and rather unreasonably wielded as a slogan worried them.

So the Rye Development Plan was killed — but there

still existed the condition that had caused a large number of good men to spend three years trying to remedy it. Impossible parking conditions and traffic congestion were driving business away from Rye. About six months after the plan was voted down a new chairman of the Planning Commission was appointed. Mr. Frederick P. Clark, a Rye resident, was at this time Planning Director of the Regional Planning Association of New York and had been in planning work since he left college. His standing in the profession was very high. Mr. Clark was not only a planner, he was also a student of human nature. He studied the situation and instead of going into committee and drawing up a new plan, he began, wisely, by calling for suggestions from the citizens of Rye. He invited the business and civic organizations of the city to appoint representatives to meet with the Commission and talk things over. What did they most want to see accomplished, and what ought to be done first? After months of meetings and conferences the men on the Commission had a pretty fair idea of what projects would have support.

On June 8, 1948, a referendum was held and a bond issue of \$1,545,000 to be spent on public improvements recommended by the Planning Commission was passed — not by a large margin, but it was passed. Four resolutions were embodied, one on sanitary sewage and storm drains establishment, one on pavement of parking areas and streets, one on the acquisition of land for parking areas, playgrounds, etc., and a fourth on the development of parks and playgrounds.

Almost all the projects in this new plan had been in the Packard plan, with the addition of a project for public small-boat facilities in the city harbor. The plan for the business district, however, was cut down from *complete redevelopment* to nothing more than adequate parking areas. Another change was in the order of priority. The biggest single project was for business district parking and that was to be the first thing done.

The Planning Commission also made changes in zoning regulations looking toward limiting the number of families per acre in each residential zone, new minimum standards for house sizes, lot sizes and sewage facilities and a Board of Architectural Review was set up, with veto power to prevent eyesores and look-alike houses.

Before going on to some account of accomplishments

under the new plan, changes that had been occurring in the city administration should be noted. Inevitably, non-partisan government came to an end not long after Rye became a city. Gone was the old caucus system of which Rye had been so proud, and which still exists in some Westchester villages. In 1947 Mayor Sewall announced that he wished to give more time to his private business and would not be a candidate for re-election. For ten years Grenville Sewall had been working for Rye; the first two as a member of that hard working committee that drafted the city charter; for the five years succeeding, as Village Trustee and City Councilman; and from 1944 to 1947 as Mayor. Important changes took place during his term of office. He was one of the foremost promoters of the consolidation of Rye's school districts; the arrangements for the housing of veterans were made during his administration; and, lastly, the long-range plans for the orderly development of Rye were drawn up, many features of which were to be later adopted — the rezoning, the off-street parking, and the development of 51 Milton Road and other playground areas. No one could say that he had not earned the right to retire.

Karl Frederick, one of Rye's outstanding citizens, was elected to succeed Mr. Sewall in November, 1947, and on the doorstep of his Council was now laid the furtherance of many plans and projects.

Although the voters had in June, 1948, approved the purchase of land for off-street parking it was not until the following year that the first purchase of land at the rear of Purchase Street stores was made. The delay was due, in part, to the housing situation. It was hard on the people who lived on Locust Avenue, Elm Street and West Purdy Avenue, the districts mainly affected, to find other places to live, and the City really leaned over backward to be fair and just. The first completed parking lot with room for seventy cars was opened up in July, 1951, the second on November 10 of the same year, at which time the car parks were officially dedicated by members of the City Council and the President of the Board of Trade, Goddard Light. It was felt that these parks would be of great advantage to the tradespeople and so keen was the City on having the rear of the shopping district look as attractive as the front that an architect was employed to advise the merchants. The parking lots were well planned and made attractive with a planting designed and executed by the Garden Club

in its usual fine, professional style. Open and spacious, there was a good clear vista from Locust Avenue straight through to West Purdy Avenue. If prizes were to be awarded for rear entrance decoration first would certainly go to Lilian Greig of the Gift in Hand Shop whose little terrace garden is a delight to the eye at all seasons of the year. Other firms, too, improved their rear entrances and the Rye National Bank did a particularly good job.

Our ambitious Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce in 1952 cooperated with the New York State Department of Commerce in having a survey of shopping in Rye made. Answers to a questionnaire revealed that shoppers in general were pleased with conditions but would suggest more variety in styles, prices and quality. They would like a good restaurant or tea room to which they could take guests, and they would like to see some of the older shops modernized, treated to a new coat of paint, and generally spruced up. The report found that 80.5 per cent of Rye residents do some shopping outside of Rye, and it was granted that with White Plains and New York so near it was too much to expect that this condition would not exist. With the encouragement given by the car parks and the stimulation of this survey several shops took the initiative in modernizing. The Biltmore Pharmacy did so, the Rye Chemists, Goldenberg's stationery store and Odell's Hardware. An especially attractive job was done by Stone and Erlanger on the Purdy Avenue corner where, in 1952, four old houses were remodeled in such a way as to preserve their colonial character but by use of clear, bright colors, window boxes and other details to make them so appealing that people began to write letters to the paper about them and urge others to take a leaf from their book. There is no doubt that Rye's main street has been greatly improved and that much more attention is paid to window dressing than formerly.

A further parking problem came up at this time. The New Haven railroad announced that it could no longer furnish free parking and put up in part for sale, in part for lease, the property formerly used for that purpose. The city was given priority and in order to protect itself against its being acquired by commercial enterprises decided to buy the property. At a special referendum on June 17, 1952, a bond issue of \$75,000 was voted for the purpose. The leasing of additional land at very little cost except abatement of taxes was also approved. Rye's problem of business

district parking seems now to be taken care of — or will be when the area at the east side of Purchase Street is completed.

Mayor Frederick, having served his two year term, said that he found it impossible with his other responsibilities to give the time and strength necessary to the conduct of city affairs and asked that he not be considered as a candidate in the next election. This announcement was received with regret for he had brought to the office of Mayor the keen, well-trained mind of a lawyer and business man and had been instrumental in developing the city-wide improvement program and the completion of an agreement with the county which assured Rye of adequate health protection.

Almost immediately Joseph A. Hannan, our present Mayor, was endorsed by both Republicans and Democrats as their candidate for the office. Mr. Hannan, Village Treasurer and City Comptroller without a break since 1910, under the state law had reached the retirement age in 1946. The city officials, knowing a good man when they saw him, had applied for several extensions so that it was not until April 1, 1949, that his retirement was actually effected and that he had shaken off the cares of office and prepared to enjoy earned leisure. A false hope! for in less than four months he was recalled to service. Apparently thirty-nine years was not enough for a man to give, although to many of us who are what used to be called "poor in arithmetic," the mental picture of a man adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing for even *ten* years staggers the imagination. At the end of such a full quota of service the added responsibilities of mayorship were something to assume. In any event, to everyone's satisfaction Mr. Hannan accepted the call, was duly elected, and on Inauguration Day, January 2, 1950, a capacity crowd assembled at the Square House to see the oath of office taken by a man whom the *Chronicle* characterized as "a public official who we sincerely believe has contributed more to the orderly management of municipal affairs than any other individual. . . . who, in his dealings with the public over these thirty-nine years, has made countless friends through his unfailing graciousness." Five former Mayors under whom Mr. Hannan had served as Treasurer and Comptroller were present on this occasion.

Work on all three of the projects whose development

was made possible by the 1948 bond issue was, of course, being carried on simultaneously. The off-street parking was well on its way in 1951. Meanwhile the set-up of a truly functional community recreation center was also in progress. For many years a Recreation Commission had been in existence with most of its activity centered at the "Y", but it had been hampered by a lack of recognition and support. In 1944 the Community Chest and the Planning Commission joined together to make a broad study of recreation facilities in Rye. They retained the services of Dr. Charles Hendry, Research Director for the Boy Scouts of America, to make an inventory report. This was published in November, 1944. A Committee of Youth Services, composed of Ellis C. Baum, Mrs. Alan M. Lincoln, and David B. Dyche, appointed by the Chest, and Mrs. J. J. McCarthy, Orlo R. Chamberlain and Leonard V. Harrison by the Planning Commission, was then formed to consider the Hendry report and as a lay-citizen's group to make further exploration and concrete recommendations for providing adequate youth services for Rye. Their report was issued in June, 1945, and was of great value in determining action to be taken by the City.

At a meeting on March 21, 1945, the City Council established by resolution a Recreation Commission which was granted all the powers conferred on such commissions by the State and supplied with funds for the development of a recreation program. It consisted of five unsalaried members appointed by the Mayor to serve for five years. Karl T. Frederick was Chairman, Wayne L. Lowe, Leonard V. Harrison, John J. Feeley and Mrs. John J. McCarthy his associates. On Mr. Harrison's leaving Rye, J. Ellis Knowles was appointed in his place, and when Mr. Frederick resigned from the Commission to become Mayor his position as Chairman was filled by William F. Irwin. It was not until January, 1950, however, that the Commission had a year-round Recreation Director. At that time the full-time services of Ralph J. Damiano, who since 1948 had been employed by the Commission and the Board of Education jointly, were taken over by the City.

Fortunately the site for a recreation center was in readiness. In January, 1942, the City had acquired for municipal use the historic house at 51 Milton Road which after the Revolution (on another site) had been used as a place of worship by Christ's Church. House and site were deeded

to the City by its owners in lieu of back taxes. It was in use by the City in the following summer and was at first occupied by the City Health Department, the Visiting Nurses Association (formerly the League of Social Service) and certain departments of Civil Defense. In November, 1944 the City bought about twelve acres between Milton Road and Midland Avenue adjoining this property. It was suggested that it might well be established as a war memorial park and that a municipal center might be built there.

What it has actually become, as we know, is one of the finest recreational areas in the county. We call it simply — and apparently with finality — 51 Milton Road, and this in spite of several attempts to give it a name of some significance. Rye's two municipal buildings seem to be of the rugged individualist type and to have wills of their own. Look at the Square House which scorns to be known by any other title! "No fancy, modern names for me!" say those old clapboards and iron nails.

The development of recreational facilities came gradually. In the spring of 1946 construction of the playing field was in progress and hard and soft ball diamonds were available for use by summer. In 1947 the multiple-use play area was built and by the next year the tennis courts were ready. Additional bleachers and a children's playground followed and a final achievement was a seven-acre picnic area with rustic tables, five fireplaces, a well with good drinking water and an Adirondack shelter. The nature of the ground here in the picnic area with its rocky elevations and many fine old trees make this an ideal place for family parties.

Not all the Recreation Commission's activities are carried on at "51". In 1949 land was bought in West Rye for a public playground. It was in use by the following summer and included a soft-ball diamond, bocci courts, merry-go-rounds and see-saws for little children and a picnic grove. In August, 1950, it was dedicated as the Samuel Gagliardo Memorial Field in tribute to Sgt. Gagliardo who lost his life in action with the 29th Division during World War II. The dedication service was arranged by the Triple A Club. Mayor Hannan raised over the field a flag presented by William F. Irwin, Chairman of the Commission, and a memorial plaque on its stone marker was unveiled by Sgt. Gagliardo's mother. The situation of the field, right in the heart of the little Italian settlement, is most pleasant and its use in the outdoor months very satisfying.

FIFTY YEARS OF RYE

In the summer of 1950 in response to a need which had existed for many years a small-boat facility with over thirty-five moorings was made available at the City Dock on Milton Harbor.

Summer playground work under experienced direction is an important feature of the Commission's program and five playgrounds are currently available; at the Milton School, the Rye Country Day School, the Gagliardo Memorial Field, the recreation area at 51 Milton Road and a small section of Oakland Beach. The annual reports issued by the Commission give an excellent picture of its well-organized activities showing, as they do, the almost unlimited facilities for recreation to be found in the various areas. One of the announced purposes of the Recreation Commission is "to bring the family as a unit, as well as individual members of it, into the recreation picture." With the set-up that now exists this objective should have every chance of success.

In January, 1950, the Teen-Age Canteen, opened in 1947 at the instance of a large group of High School students and maintained by a Citizen's Committee was turned over, with the consent of the City Council, to the Recreation Commission's direction. It is now financed by an appropriation from the Commission's budget but is still run by the young people themselves with an employee of the Commission as advisor. Its location at Depot Plaza has never been entirely satisfactory and it is planned that at some future time the Canteen will have its own building, located at or near "51".

That part of the Public Improvement Program financed by the bond issue of 1948 which had to do with sewers, storm water drains and pavement projects was nearly completed by 1954. There remained yet to be done some miscellaneous sewers, drains and pavements in scattered locations.

The three major projects of the Planning Commission were, as we have seen, well on their way to completion by the mid-fifties. What else had been happening in city affairs?

There had been plenty of problems, as always, and some are still extant. There had also been achievements. Looking first at the problems: Civil Defense was one. When World War II ended in 1945 the local branch was, with relief, cut down to the vanishing point except for a small group

of men who volunteered to remain in the police reserves. In the summer of 1950 when war broke out in Korea it became necessary to again mount an organization and Supervisor Warren A. Ransom was appointed Director. Again came the call for volunteers, the response, the training in first aid, the alert for auxiliary police and firemen, for wardens, the air raid tests (this time with imaginary bombs dropped in the Bronx). The advent of the Red Cross Blood-mobile was a new feature. The city was surveyed for shelters, and signs were put up in 1952 on the Post Office, Graham's Warehouse, Rye National Bank, the Grand Union, the "Y" and the railroad station. The public accepted it all with philosophy. They might as well, for State and Federal authorities tell us now that since potential danger is here to stay so, too, is Civil Defense.

One matter of public transportation which has plagued Rye for years flared up again in 1953 when the County Transportation Company, claiming that it was losing money, curtailed its services to the Milton district. On Saturdays and Sundays when the service is practically nil this situation is a hardship for people without cars. In the field of transportation, while on a different scale, was the question of the New England Thruway, the glamorous artery of traffic which was to solve the problem of heavy trucks on the Post Road and restore to that tortured avenue some of its former glory as a street of fine homes. As this is written it is still in the future and we know now that when it does come it is going to cut through one of our best apartment developments, and hospital and school property as well. At least one other great thruway is aimed in our direction and, since protest meetings and visits to Albany seem to be of no avail, Rye sits back and awaits with such calmness as it can muster what pessimists regard as its doom, optimists, its opportunity.

The City Council in the last years of the decade suffered the loss of a highly valued member of its personnel. Daniel E. Kelly, Corporation Counsel, had arrived at retirement age and after several extensions of his term had been granted to the Council he completed his long service to the city on January 1, 1954.

At the time of his retirement Mr. Kelly had the distinction of being probably the oldest official in Westchester County in point of continuous service. Appointed Village Counsel in 1911 soon after Rye's incorporation, Mr. Kelly

fell heir to a mass of legal detail incident to the reorganization of the government. Then when Rye became a city he was again charged with the onerous task of adaptation to the new status of the governing body. How he measured up to these two difficult assignments as well as to the day by day legal problems that beset the Counsel of a municipality may be gathered from a quotation from an editorial which came out in the *Rye Chronicle* at this time:

"No man has had more to do with the growth and development of this community and no man has ever served the public with greater fidelity . . . Actually he has given the best years of his life to the service of the community, subordinating his private practice as a lawyer to the duties of his office. . . . He has never been known to say 'no' when called upon to lend a helping hand."

There was trouble in these years with the water supply. Much criticism was directed at the Port Chester Water Works. In April, 1951, a handsome new house on Sunset Lane was destroyed by fire. The hydrant, on a dead end street, afforded only a trickle of water. Inspection of hydrants was demanded and in June it was announced that the Fire Department and the Water Company were working together on a check of the entire system. In August occurred two disastrous fires at the Yacht Club and the Rye Playhouse. In September the water-pressure fight was carried to the Public Service Commission. The Water Company alleged that it must have higher rates. In the end the PSC authorized an approximately thirty per cent increase in rates, contingent upon the company's compliance with an order requiring major changes in financial structure. This was the first increase in rates since 1934. New mains were constructed and the service improved, as did also the hydrant inspection, a service which is carried on by the City in addition to that maintained by the Water Works.

Water in mains and hydrants is good. In fields and cellars, no. One of the severest Council "headaches" came in March, 1953, when Blind Brook staged the worst flood in its history. Photographs show the High School stadium totally under water, ducks swimming in Wappanocca Avenue right in front of our Senator's house. Heating plants were swamped, cellars ruined. The combination of spring freshets and high tides seems always to be too much for our ordinarily gentle little brook even though some progress has been made in controlling it. Nature was a little capricious in her treatment of us in this decade, for back in 1947 had

occurred the worst blizzard since 1888 — 25 inches of snow — and now in 1954 came Hurricanes Carol, Edna and Hazel.

Another source of trouble, particularly in the Apawamis section, where residents had water and gas mains broken and houses injured by blasting, was the beginning of the construction of the new Blind Brook Trunk Sewer line. The mains installed in Rye many years ago had become insufficient to carry off the increase in sewage caused by the City's growth, hence this million dollar project, assessed against the various districts benefited.

In 1953 a matter came up which, while trying at the time, nevertheless proved to the satisfaction of some that when there is strong public feeling on a subject and the citizen pulls himself out of his usual apathy sufficiently to express himself, he really does have power and the democratic process works. The Carvel Stores Realty Corporation of Hartsdale, ice-cream manufacturers, in the spring of '53 asked the City for a building permit to erect on the empty site of the Rye Playhouse a Carvel Dairy-Freeze Store. When, after the unanimous disapproval of the Architectural Board of Review, the permit was not given the company took the matter to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Early in July the affair reached the press and protests began to appear immediately. These continued during the weeks that the matter remained unsettled. Aroused citizens wrote long letters to the Square House which found their way into the *Chronicle*; old residents recalled that deed covenants were put upon the property by Mrs. William H. Parsons when she sold it to the Playhouse, ensuring the protection of her gifts to the village of the Green and the library site; the Loudon Woods Association sent a protest, the Woman's Club, the Ceres Garden Club; and when the representatives of this company still persisted a public meeting was called for the night when they came to plead their cause before the Zoning Board of Appeals and about forty citizens appeared and made their feelings perfectly clear.

The practical objection, based on the traffic hazard involved in building at this dangerous intersection, probably weighed most heavily in making the decision, although what was termed "excessive inappropriateness in relation to existing structures and adjacent land uses" was what was at the back of old residents' minds. It must be admitted that the meeting was a little embarrassing at moments, as when

the Carvel spokesman pointed out that there had existed some degree of the inappropriate when the supermarket and gas station were established in the same neighborhood, and when he made slighting allusions to the building across the street (by which he meant our old blacksmith shop). But the deep feeling that was evident prevailed and, although decision was not given that evening, in a short time the permit was definitely denied.

We must now change over rapidly to the "achievement" column because the sequel to this story is that in less than a year the City of Rye, in order to protect it, bought this property. Whether we shall see there sometime a fine new municipal building and, near neighbor to it, the Square House fulfilling its mission as a museum of local history we do not know, but we do know that we no longer have to worry lest some enterprising outlander erect there, on the site which Sara Ely Parsons had taken such infinite pains to protect almost fifty years ago, a gas station or an ice cream parlor.

Earlier in these pages was recounted, with some feeling, the demolishment of two houses with historical associations, the Strang House and the residence of William H. Parsons. It may appear inconsistent when we list as an *achievement* at this time the tearing down of a third landmark, a little colonial farm-house so old that the historians are not able to fix the date of its construction with absolute sureness, knowing only that it was inhabited in 1690, in the years when Rye still belonged to Connecticut. The achievement lies not in the demolishment, which was unavoidable, but in the intelligent, painstaking approach to it, and the care with which the operation was carried out.

The Mead Farm Cottage stood on the Old Post Road near the Parkway on land belonging to the Osborn Home. In 1950 the Trustees of the Home considered restoring it, at considerable cost, but when some of the walls were opened up they were found to be so infested with termites and the timbers so rotted that experts were called in. They were architects and members of the Westchester County Historical Association, among them Jonathan Butler, Elliott Hunt, Roger Sherman and Allison Albee, and all agreed, reluctantly, that the original structure was not in condition to be preserved. We shall quote at this point from the article written by Mr. Albee for the *Rye Chronicle* of April 26, 1951:

THE LAST DECADE

"Under the guidance of R. Eugene Curry, the Home's managing director, a careful photographic record of construction details is being preserved as the demolition progresses. John Gass, official Westchester County Park Commission photographer, is carrying out this work while the Field Exploration Committee of the Westchester County Historical Society is in frequent attendance, recording measurements and preserving samples of chimney clay, shingles, laths, rafter joints and similar items."

This seems to us a shining example of the way in which, if destruction of an historical landmark is unavoidable, it can be carried out in such a way as to preserve for posterity whatever is retrievable.

Undeniably an achievement was the acquisition in October, 1950, of a footbridge across Blind Brook from Milton Road to Disbrow Park, affording a second entrance to the Park in addition to that on Oakland Beach Avenue. This was the more than generous gift of Rye's former Mayor, J. Motley Morehead, for the many difficulties encountered in its construction, when soil conditions necessitated the use of piles, had made it an extremely costly undertaking. At the dedication ceremony another former Mayor, Livingston Platt, told how Mr. Morehead had bought the land on Oakland Beach Avenue years ago, had given it to the city in order to make the park accessible and had built the entrance there as well. This was only a further step, he said, in a series of gifts made by him to the city.

In 1951 Mayor Hannan initiated a helpful series of letters to Rye residents called "News from the Square House." Six of these little leaflets have been issued, giving citizens factual and useful information on their city government. They reflect the friendly, "all-in-the-family" spirit that we feel characterizes our city.

Important changes took place in the public school system of Rye in this decade. In 1945 the charter of the City was amended to establish a City School District. This resulted in the consolidation of the three existing districts, Rye, Milton and the Bradford Park-Glen Oaks section. A Board of Education consisting of seven members was set up, Mrs. A. W. Packard, George M. Langeloh and Gordon McCulloh representing Milton, Esmond Shaw, John Beach and Kenneth Ward, Rye, and Roy W. Patterson Bradford Park-Glen Oaks. George M. Langeloh was President of the

Board, Wayne L. Lowe, then High School Principal, was appointed Superintendent of Schools and Elizabeth J. Brown became Principal of the High School.

Since the passing of this amendment changes have taken place in the State Education Law which made City School Districts even more autonomous than before. They have acquired rights definitely more extensive than before but they have also acquired, and will of necessity assume, responsibilities co-extensive with these greater rights.

A further change in the school system was imminent. In almost thirty years of steady population growth no new elementary school facilities had been added to Rye's school system. The Post Road school was obsolete and unsafe. Milton school was badly overcrowded. The war had held up any major construction and after the war rising costs of materials and labor provided further obstacles. It was generally agreed, however, that something must be done and in late '48 and early '49 the columns of our weekly began to reflect the pros and cons of arguments by parents and other interested citizens. Indignation meetings were held at which conditions, especially in the Post Road School, were the subject of heated discussion.

In October, 1949, an appropriation of \$25,000 was voted to make possible the purchase of land for a new school site on the Barron estate on Midland Avenue. Next the Board of Education voted to recommend that the school district approve a bond issue of \$851,000 to erect a new elementary school on this site. In March, 1950, this referendum was passed and the school authorities began to approve architects' plans and issue contracts. In April, 1951, it was announced that an additional sum would be needed to finance the construction owing to the rapid rise in building costs since March, 1950, and a proposition to raise \$170,000 more was passed a month later. The culmination of almost two years of effort by parents, school authorities and interested organizations was reached on May 10, 1951, when at last ground was broken for the Midland Avenue School. On January 5, 1953, the school held its first session and a formal dedication took place March 5, 1953.

While this enlargement of public school facilities was being made the Church of the Resurrection had also been in action and had acquired and renovated the former Whittemore residence on Milton Road adjacent to their elementary school. This was dedicated by Cardinal Spell-

man on September 10, 1950 and was opened as a girls' high school under the name of the Academy of the Resurrection on the following day.

Before leaving the subject of schools, mention should be made of a side of school life about which far too little has been said in these pages and that is sports. Since space is lacking to go into it in detail we wish to use as illustration the program at the Rye High School and to begin by calling attention to the outstanding record in recent years made by the football and basketball teams.

In football the high school boys have won their last twenty-six straight games. They also have held the SWIAC ('Southern Westchester Interscholastic Athletic Conference) championship for four successive years, 1951-54. In basketball Rye High School has won the SWIAC championship for two consecutive years, 1952-53, 1953-54, and the Class B (Section 1) championship for the same period. Other sports included in the boys' program are baseball and the following more recent additions: tennis, begun in 1934, track in 1935, cross-country in 1949 and golf, informally in 1950 and on a formal basis in 1954.

The girls at Rye High School do not take part in competitive athletics. Instead they have an extensive intramural program terminating in a selected honor team. The sports are field hockey, volley ball, basketball, softball and tennis. Bowling and archery are included in the program to promote individual participation. The playdays with other schools are very popular in all the above sports.

Experience shows that organizations that stand still tend to slip backward after a time. Three other foundations in Rye whose growth we have been following, the Hospital, the "Y" and the Library, show no symptoms of slowing down. Each has its record of progress.

In June, 1947, Eugene H. B. Watson, President of the Board of Directors of the United Hospital, stated that the hospital had an operating deficit of \$75,000 which must be met if it was to continue to function. With considerable pride he was able to report to the Board in July that over \$93,000 had been raised. He said that more than one thousand people in this area had shared in putting the hospital on a sound financial basis by their gifts; that the smallest gift was \$4

and a fine letter came with it; the largest gift was \$10,000 and there were two of them. All kinds of organizations and institutions had helped. And he ended his report with the words, "What a community!"

Early in the fifties the United Hospital announced that it had outgrown its facilities and must build an addition, no building having been done since 1928. A campaign to raise a million dollar building fund was started and by the spring of 1952 had reached its goal through large gifts by organizations and people of wealth. A second drive was organized, appealing to the general public. On March 13, 1952, it was announced that \$1,203,052 had been subscribed, the largest amount ever raised in a single hospital drive in Westchester County. In June of the next year the new Memorial Pavilion was dedicated. (So great was the need for it that the first floor had already been in use for several months.)

When ground was broken for this pavilion the honor of turning the first spadeful was awarded to Mrs. C. Helme Strater, chairman of the Board of Managers, "as a tribute to the unflagging support women have given the hospital through the years." This was a well earned honor. If one considered only the women of the "Twigs" and what they have done a book could be written! In the year 1951-2 they gave the hospital, in round numbers, \$49,500. This was the most they had ever contributed in a single year. It seemed generous. But in 1953-54 it became known that the "Twigs" had given the hospital \$78,400, an all-time high. The "Twigs" never stand still. In this decade they have opened two new commission shops, the Nearly New Shop and the Twig Traders. The hospital needed another ambulance. In the spring of 1954 the "Twigs" produced "The Follies of 1954" and realized over \$16,000, enough to buy the ambulance and lay a nest egg for another one later on. The end is not yet, for in the summer of 1954 ground was broken for a new Service and Surgical Wing. The United Hospital certainly marches on.

The directors of the "Y" during its thirty-five year history had twice deferred its expansion program, the second occasion being in 1951 in order that it might not interfere with the hospital campaign. In May, 1953, with the approval of the Planning Commission and the Community Chest the directors started a drive for a \$300,000 building fund to construct an all-year-round indoor swimming pool and to replace the old frame house by a modern clubhouse.

The campaign dragged at the start but by the end of the year through gifts and benefits \$185,000 had been pledged, and since the pool which was the popular objective and the ambition of Secretary Cope for a long time could, it was thought, be built for that sum, it was determined to start work on that and let the modernization plan for the clubhouse wait.

Louis Cope did not live to see this one of his dreams fulfilled. On December 13, 1953, news of his death shocked the community. Flags were at half mast for this simple, unaffected man who had for so many years given himself without stint to the youth of Rye. The moving tribute alluded to earlier in these pages ends:—

“‘Unmarried, he leaves no immediate survivors’ the local paper reported. But this was not quite true. The bicycles were parked row on row in the parking lot of Christ’s Episcopal Church on the day of Pa’s funeral. All of his boys—hundreds of them from miles around—came on their bikes to say farewell. The list of pallbearers was long and impressive. The eulogies were moving. The flowers spilled over a fire truck in the procession. But the most poignant tribute of all was offered by the bicycles in the churchyard. They told who would miss Pa most.”

In January, 1954, Larry Nelson was appointed to succeed Mr. Cope, under whom he had worked for some time as assistant, and in October ground was broken for the Pa Cope Memorial Swimming Pool. Samuel Thorne, for many years Chairman of the Board of Directors, wielded the spade and Stanley J. Keyes, Jr. President of the “Y” addressed the audience of City officials and community leaders. Prospects were fair, it was stated, that the pool would be in use in 1955.

In March, 1953 it was announced by the Board of Trustees of the Rye Free Reading Room that Marcia Dalphin, their librarian, had requested her retirement as of June 1st, and on that date she completed her long period of service of thirty-three years and her able successor, Ruth Harry, became librarian.

All these years since 1934, the last year that mention was made of the library in these pages, the Rye Free Reading Room very quietly and unobtrusively, after the fashion of these institutions, had been adding to its store of books and increasing their use. Where in 1934 it had on its shelves 13,700 books, at the close of 1954 it had 26,566; instead of lending 56,500 books for home reading it was lending 80,646. The village, later the city, had increased its appropriation generously in response to well-based appeals

of the Trustees to keep pace with its growth. The appropriation had hovered around the \$4,000 to \$5,000 figure, however, until 1946 when it was raised to \$8,000 and subsequently by slow stages to \$19,000, the 1954 figure.

It was fine to have 26,000 books instead of 13,000 but every year it became harder to find a place to put them. In 1940 a small new wing had been added which helped for a time but by 1949 the overcrowding was again becoming a serious problem. With campaigns going on for funds for the Hospital and the "Y" as well as the annual appeals from the Red Cross and the Community Chest, and in the face of high building costs, it seemed to the Library Board fruitless to engage in an additional fund-raising campaign, although an addition to the library would have been the ideal solution. Accordingly, in the summer of 1954 the Library dug down into its small reserves, had a mezzanine floor constructed in the west wing which would take care of several thousand books and also enclosed the basement room, thus giving additional storage space as well as support for the increased floor load.

Having continually in mind its readers' tastes the Library introduced at the close of the year a new service. A small collection of long-playing records was purchased with gifts from interested music lovers. These will be circulated freely and if it becomes a popular feature the collection will be increased.

The history of Rye's banks in the fifties is one of growth and consolidation. On July 24, 1948, the Rye Trust Company celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. Starting with initial deposits of approximately \$131,000 it now had nearly \$5,000,000 and its depositors numbered close to 6,000. In November, 1950, the Rye National Bank broke ground for an addition and on October 27, 1951, it celebrated not only its completion and the renovation of the older part of the building but its fiftieth anniversary, and held a big reception to which the public was invited. Among the proud hosts was Howard Parker, the bank's President, who enjoys the distinction of having entered its service as a clerk in 1901, and having served his institution and the community without a break ever since. In the spring of 1954 occurred the final change in Rye's banking system when the directors and stockholders of the Trust Company and the Rye National voted to consolidate. On May 17, 1954, the street corner where the Rye Trust Company had functioned since 1923



RYE BEACH AND RYE BEACH HOTEL
*Showing old steamship pier
about 1900.*



AERIAL VIEW OF PLAYLAND TODAY

looked lonely. The doors were shut and, as announced, its officers and staff members were to be found on duty at the Rye National Bank on the opposite corner. A friendlier service than is given us there it would be hard to discover.

While on the subject of anniversary celebrations it is fitting to mention that of another of the city's institutions, the *Rye Chronicle* which in the same year announced that it, too, was fifty years old. The editorial which drew attention to this fact said modestly, and a shade wistfully, perhaps, that the paper had *tried*. Alluding to Rye's increase from a small country hamlet of a few hundred people to a modern community of 12,000 it said, "We would like to think that we have played a part in this steady and healthy growth." We do not know how many commendatory letters the editor may have received during the following week but they should have been numerous, for in its half century the *Chronicle* has certainly maintained a high standard in both its news and its editorial columns and has backed up every worthwhile, forward looking movement in the community. It has not only earned the regard of its readers but it has had several of those awards from its own profession which mean so much to a newspaper man, the most recent being an award by the New York Press Association of second place among weekly newspapers of its class in a statewide competition based on content and appearance in 1954.

For many years readers have encountered in the press, in magazines and in books statements backed by statistics asserting that the influence of the Christian church was waning, that churches were losing ground in financial support and attendance. Of recent years the tone is more optimistic. Whether the twentieth century is going to be known as the era of a return to religion it is too soon to tell, but there is certainly evidence in support of the theory.

A conspicuous instance of a growing interest among thinking people is the recent establishment here of a center for the Laymen's Movement for a Christian World. At an impressive dedication service on May 20, 1951, title to Wainwright House, a beautiful building on spacious grounds, formerly the home of the J. Mayhew Wainwright family, was presented to the Laymen's Movement by Mrs.

Philip K. Conduct in memory of her parents, Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright and Laura Buchanan Wainwright. In its simplest terms the announced purpose of the organization is to build Christian principles into the everyday life of the world. Wainwright House has a quiet but steadily growing influence in the community.

Here in our small residential suburb where the churches and their activities have always played an important part, developments in recent years seem to point up the fact that there is a stronger trend toward inter-church cooperation than ever before. In 1940 the Inter-Church Council of Rye was formed, composed of the clergy of the three Protestant churches and a number of lay members appointed annually by their respective churches. In March, 1953, the Community Synagogue was invited to join the Council. The Synagogue accepted the invitation and the Rabbi and two laymen of his congregation are now members of the organization. The aims of the Inter-Church Council as announced are, "To promote understanding and fellowship among the churches and the Synagogue. To encourage and develop religious education for both young people and adults. To stimulate interest in public participation in religious festivities in Rye." The Council sponsors the Three Hour Service on Good Friday, the Easter Sunrise Service, the Union Thanksgiving Service and the Community Christmas Carol Singing and also arranges three Union Lenten services. Among its activities, of prime importance is the maintenance of a Week-Day Church School which has gone on without interruption since 1948. A World Day of Prayer is held every year on the Friday following Ash Wednesday. This is under the sponsorship of the women's organizations of the Rye churches.

While the era of church building in Rye is perhaps over, improvements and additions continue to be made. Christ's Church in 1953 created a new chapel, the Chapel of Thanksgiving. This was the gift of John Ellis Knowles and is a conversion of the former sacristy adjoining the south side of the chancel. In its floor is embedded a stone eight centuries old which bears this inscription:—"This stone from the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Rye, England, shall forever symbolize our common faith and traditions." The stained glass windows in the chapel were given by Mrs. Stewart C. Schenck in memory of her husband.

The Garden of Remembrance, a very beautiful planting

given to the church in 1940, lies between the church and the parish house. It is the gift of Charles Godfrey Strater, designated from his estate by his son, C. Helme Strater. A Columbarium for the use of members of the church was established here in 1950.

Looking forward to its seventy-fifth anniversary, which will occur in 1955, the Church of the Resurrection determined to wipe out the parish debt on the church and redecorate it as well. By the close of 1953 Monsignor McGowan was able to announce to his people that the goal of \$200,000 had not only been reached but passed. In 1954 the church added to its holdings on the Post Road side by purchasing a property adjoining it on the north. The house on this property is now serving as a useful annex to the Academy of the Resurrection and is called Marian Hall.

In September 1950, the Methodist Church of Rye broke into the news in a unique fashion. A large truck was passing along the driveway when suddenly a wheel sank heavily below the surface. Upon investigation there was discovered a twenty-foot well shaft which held an old wooden bucket fallen to pieces but with staves and metal bottom remaining. The well evidently dated back to the days when the Parsonage was the old Rye Fort. It was preserved and presented to the city and bears this inscription:—

"This well served the Fort 1676, the Inn 1728-1868, the Parsonage 1868—and was preserved by the gifts of members of the Methodist Church and Rye citizens, 1950."

In 1947 the Presbyterian Church entered upon an extensive reconstruction project of which the principal features were the enlargement of the chancel, the relocation of the organ and the renovation of the Sunday school rooms. A gift of \$200,000 from Eugene H. B. Watson facilitated much of this and the remainder was made up by gifts from the congregation. A fine set of carillonic bells was presented to the church in 1948, given by Mr. and Mrs. Everett L. Crawford in memory of Mrs. Crawford's brother, Franklin H. Gregory.

The one entirely new religious foundation to be established in Rye during the late forties and early fifties was the Community Synagogue, a congregation of Reformed Jews made up of members of that faith who had previously been attending services in private homes. In the summer of 1950 negotiations were completed for the purchase of Villa Aurora, a large Georgian-Colonial house, formerly the home

of the late George D. Barron. Seven acres of land around it were included in the purchase. Opening services were held there in September and a year later Samuel H. Gordon was installed as its first Rabbi. The Community Synagogue now firmly established in its beautiful building maintains a religious school, an auxiliary sisterhood and men's clubs also a Contemporary Forum with distinguished visiting lecturers.

The Girl Scouts and the Brownies, the Boy Scouts and the Cub Packs are now such an integral part of the picture of life in Rye that we are perhaps in danger of taking for granted all the work and devotion that is put by their leaders into the maintenance of the organizations. It is a far cry from 1936 when there were about 175 girls in the Scouts to today when there are 439 enrolled. Forty-two leaders and assistants are registered and eighty-three adult council and committee members. This means that nearly six hundred citizens, young and old, are engaged in this important, constructive work. When, added to this, we find approximately 350 boys registered as Scouts and Cubs and over a hundred men working as leaders and advisers, that brings the ranks up to over a thousand, a generous slice of the population of Rye.

In the spring of 1953 the Board of Education gave the Girl Scouts permission to occupy the former gate house of the Barron estate, a three-story building on the north west corner of the Midland School grounds. It was in sad condition, almost all the windows broken and, inside, dirty and dingy to a degree. A fix-up committee was appointed and a call sent out for volunteers. The house was dedicated and opened December 13, 1953. And what a job had been done! Not only the scouts and their leaders had worked their fingers to the bone but fathers and mothers, fond relatives and friends had joined the fray. Fathers, especially, had been found cooperative — and convenient. A delightful sequel to the project is furnished in the report of something that happened at the National Conference of Girl Scouts in Cincinnati that year, brought back by delegates in attendance from Rye. The theatre's well-loved star, Helen Hayes, is strong for Scouting and when she was making a speech at the convention to the surprise of our Rye women she began suddenly to talk about the Scouts of Rye and their new clubhouse. She had read an account of it in the *New York Times* and she addressed herself particularly to the men in the audience, dwelling in the most delightful way on

what the fathers in Rye did, "the strong-backs and the know-hows." She made a good story of it and anyone who has seen her and her wiles as Maggie in *What Every Woman Knows*, can easily imagine how that audience was charmed. Perhaps by now every Girl Scout clubhouse in the country has suffered a sea change.

No one leafing through the file of the *Rye Chronicle* could fail to note the extent of the changes that fifty years of growth have made in the opportunities here for recreation. 51 Milton Road, the "Y," the schools with their gymnasiums and playing fields, the summer playgrounds, all offer facilities for the making of strong bodies and the development of qualities of good sportsmanship undreamed of in the early years of the century. Equal advance in opportunity is offered us in recreation for the mind. Here the churches, schools and clubs play a part, and so various is the entertainment afforded that the Recreation Commission office now maintains a calendar of events in order that dates may not conflict too impossibly. At that, it is often hard to get a date for an important meeting which has not already been pre-empted weeks ahead.

Unless one is extremely selective it is no longer as necessary as it used to be (except for opera, symphony concerts or first-rank plays) to go to New York for entertainment, coming back late for dinner or half-asleep on the midnight. Many well known speakers and musicians have been brought to Rye in recent years. The Woman's Club has introduced, among others, William L. Shirer, Marguerite Higgins, Alistair Cooke, Padraic Colum, Cleveland Amory, Allan Cruickshank, Princess Ileana. Other clubs and the churches have brought Stanley High and Robert Patterson, Gerald Heard, General Eisenhower, Ludwig Lewisohn, Norman Thomas. The Forum, a non-sectarian lecture course and discussion group widely attended, sponsored by the Presbyterian Church, has had qualified speakers from all over the world discussing important current issues — Formosa, Pakistan, Arab-Israeli relations and many others.

In addition to the great artists appearing from time to time at the County Center — Horowitz, Casadesus, Flagstad, Iturbi, Myra Hess and others — music lovers have enjoyed the fine talent that the Rye Community Concerts

Association, formed in 1947, has been bringing here, such artists as Bartlett and Robinson, duo pianists, the Du Paur Infantry Chorus, Alec Templeton, Claudio Arrau, Guilmar Novaes, Erica Morini, the Gershwin Concert Orchestra and the Trapp Family Singers. Nor should we omit mention of our own local talent which has given us evenings of rewarding music. Two choral groups, the Rye Town Singers, a male chorus led by John Finley, and the Rye Choral Singers, a woman's organization led formerly by Dominick Tranzillo, now by Lucianna Hnatt, have been in existence for almost ten years. The music Department of the Rye High School has recently staged some ambitious and successful performances, notably *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and *Brigadoon*. Now and again some big benefit performance is produced and the recent extravaganzas of music and dance, *Rio Rita* and the *Follies of 1954* were said to reach professional status.

While for the famous names of the theatre we must still journey to the city we must not forget that Rye has had good amateur dramatics in recent years. In 1947 the Recreation Commission sponsored the Rye Players. Unlike many small-town groups this organization was not a "flash-in-the-pan" but was maintained until as late as 1953, giving four or five plays every year, many of them benefits for local causes. They produced such worth while plays as *Life with Father*, *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *Night Must Fall*. In the meanwhile another organization, also working with the Recreation Commission, composed largely of young college people on vacation, set up a Summer Theatre Group. Geneve Bate who had had professional stage experience previous to her marriage directed both of these groups, and during 1954 *Angel Street*, *Bell Book and Candle* and *Come Back Little Sheba*, truly ambitious, adult fare, were given good performances.

Two major catastrophes struck Rye in the same year — 1951. The first occurred on July 27 when the famous old clubhouse of the American Yacht Club in a spectacular blaze burned to the ground. Let your tears yield to cheers immediately, however, for the embers had not ceased to smoulder when the officers of the club started — figuratively speaking — to build a new clubhouse. Within the week a letter from

Commodore William L. Crow to the membership announced that a building committee had been appointed with instructions to begin work as soon as possible. About \$190,000 in fire insurance was in hand but a quarter of a million dollars would be needed in addition. The membership rallied and the amount was oversubscribed. On May 24, 1952 the cornerstone of a new clubhouse was laid and on December 6, 1952 a membership dinner and ball was held at which the building was dedicated.

Fifteen days later, August 11, Rye's charming little theatre, the Rye Playhouse, was entirely destroyed by a fire that swept through it in broad daylight just after the Saturday matinee crowd (which included scores of children) had dispersed. Now this is a case for continued weeping, no cheers are in order as after the Yacht Club disaster. The President of the Playhouse Corporation in a letter to Mayor Hannan announced that the theatre would be rebuilt, but not on the same site. A little later it was announced that the company would rebuild on the same location, but after weeks had lengthened into months it was finally given out that the playhouse would not be rebuilt — ever. Prohibitive costs were alleged as the reason. Some attempts have been made in the last few years to fill this gap in our entertainment field. The YMCA sponsored a series of films on Saturday evenings at the High School, and at the Recreation Center there have been film showings on summer nights in the outdoor theatre. Movies have been given occasionally for children, but people who enjoy good pictures still regret the passing of the Playhouse, especially when they see neighboring towns having easy access to *Sabrina*, *The Little Kidnappers*, *Roman Holiday*, *On the Waterfront* and other popular films.

There is a certain ironic humor in the reflection that so many of the clubs and other city organizations, since they have no abiding place of their own and have to meet where they can, do not have to experience the anguish of seeing their meeting places vanish in smoke and flames. However, this does not deter the Woman's Club in their ambitious and laudable endeavor to raise funds to erect a Community House. So far \$8,000 has been accumulated, a big benefit, (probably on the same magnificent scale as *Rio Rita*) is in preparation, and a club committee continues its search for a suitable site. Nor is the club idle in other fields. It is not only continuing its usual philanthropies — Grasslands,

FIFTY YEARS OF RYE

Children's Village, Red Cross, SPCC, Girl Scouts and a Rye High scholarship — but assuming two new scholarships, one in nursing and the other at White Plains Community College. In 1952 and 1953 its members conducted two extremely successful exhibits of the work of local painters and sculptors and now they have announced a stimulating program for 1954-55 which includes such arresting items as a lecture on "Modern Art: Can We Survive It?" by Charles Duveen, Jr., of the famous House of Duveen and "Midway Thru Nash", our own Ogden Nash reading from his verse with comments thereon.

Women's clubs seem to flourish in Rye's climate. Take the Garden Clubs; we now have a third, the Ceres Garden Club, originally a section of the Rye Woman's Club but now an independent unit which, while only four years old, has a membership of nearly a hundred women, is thriving and ambitious and already winning honors in competitive exhibitions. Like its elder sisters it has a civic committee and as its contribution to Rye's good looks has recently planted hundreds of tulip bulbs at the base of the city flagpole. The Rye Garden Club has finished its self appointed task of tree planting on Purchase Street. Seven pin oaks and five London plane trees were planted, the division of labor being as follows: the City of Rye dug the holes, the Club bought the trees and had them planted, City Forester Palmer supervising. We go into this detail to show what a truly cooperative enterprise this was.

To raise money for their civic funds the three garden clubs on May 14, 1952, combined their forces in a Garden Fair Day. This memorable affair was held at the "Y," and the great airy, light-filled gymnasium made a peculiarly attractive setting for the exquisite flower arrangements and horticultural exhibits. In the field back of the building a colorful plant sale went on and in the afternoon there was offered a tour of members' gardens. Merchants were invited to enter a window-dressing contest and altogether it was a gala day. The following year another house and garden tour was given from which the proceeds went to finance the planting in front of the new wing of the United Hospital. Rye can never repay the debt it owes to its garden clubs.

The activities of two other women's organizations should be noted here. One is the new manifestation of an old association, the League of Women Voters. Although meetings

of a branch of the Westchester County League had, with some interruptions, been held in Rye starting as early as 1927, Rye had not had a fully accredited local league. In the early '50's a number of Rye women had become affiliated with the Mamaroneck League and in September, 1952, a meeting was called at 51 Milton Road inviting the attendance of women interested in forming a local branch. A 'Rye Provisional League was organized in October with fifty-six members and as officers Mrs. Gilbert Ferris, President, Mrs. Roger Crane and Mrs. Richard Salant, 1st and 2nd Vice-Presidents, Mrs. E. D. Walden, Treasurer and Mrs. Manuel Siwek, Secretary. Provisional leagues have an apprenticeship period in which they have to prove themselves. In January, 1954, the Rye group became a fully recognized, accredited league with a membership of 143, nearly triple its original number. Its interest in the community is evidenced by the fact that the first open, public meeting in February was on the subject "Planning Today for Tomorrow", and the speakers were Frederick P. Clark, chairman of the Rye Planning Commission and William E. Snodgrass, the City Council representative on the Planning Board.

Over the years since it was founded in 1936 the Business and Professional Women's Club has become a thriving organization interested not only in its original goal, the improvement of conditions for women in the business world, but also in good government and every forward looking community project. Their programs for the year include the introduction of outside speakers, attendance at state and national meetings, Hobby Shows and social gatherings. The Club has been active in support of the Help-a-Heart campaigns, in working for the Red Cross and in contributing to such worthy causes as the building fund for Camp Mohican, Camperships for Girl Scouts, United Hospital funds and others. At state conventions it has received numerous citations, especially for percentage increases in membership.

While women's clubs in Rye seem to flourish this does not mean that those of the men are not active, too. The Lions Club is strong and the Kiwanis, though not as long established, has a membership of thirty and is particularly interested in service to youth. In recent years the club has actively promoted a Junior baseball league for boys of twelve to fifteen. In cooperation with groups in Port Chester and

Greenwich it has assisted in the vigorous campaign against Long Island Sound pollution. Among organizations more recently formed (1946) is the Triple A, a service club interested in civic, social and public affairs and in developing good citizenship. This group has acquired a piece of property and expects to build a clubhouse. The Rye Fish and Game Club was also organized in 1946 with a charter membership of ten men who were interested in the conservation of all types of wild life as well as in the promotion of fishing and hunting. This group of good sportsmen growing rapidly from its small initial membership now has a roll of one hundred twenty-four members and takes pride in its club house at 660 Milton Road. Here the Club bought a piece of land and transformed a small shack into a permanent headquarters with a kitchen, office and a large, pleasant game room for meetings and social gatherings.

Though the contacts between our Rye and the Rye in England are sporadic, nevertheless they continue and the line of communication is never really severed as long as messages and visits are interchanged. There have been in the last ten years several pleasant renewing of old ties between us.

One such took place on February 25, 1945, when Christ's Church celebrated its 250th anniversary. Commander H. A. Mallet, the resident British naval officer in New York, came to Rye and presented a British flag which was dedicated at this service and will be used hereafter at the joint service held in December, here and at St. Mary's in Rye, England.

In 1947 Councilman Robert P. Hughes while in England made it a point to visit Rye, conveying our good wishes and signing his name in the Golden Book at the City Hall. This was in the "austerity" period and his report to the City Council on reaching home was that the English people were having what he described as a "gruesome time," and that he wished we could find some way to do something for the people of Rye.

In 1951 Mayor Hannan became an honorary member of the "Rye and District Bonfire Society." Quickly — before anyone asks, "What on earth . . . ?" the reader is directed to cast his memory back to England in 1605 and to the old

rhyme about the unfortunate Guy Fawkes:—

“Please to remember the Fifth of November,
The Gunpowder Treason and Plot,
We see no good reason why Gunpowder Treason
Should ever be forgot.”

Evidently Guy Fawkes Day in England is a great day and the Bonfire Society must start betimes to lay plans for it, because it was in July that Mayor Hannan received his invitation to send a message of greeting, or better still to come in person and deliver it. Unfortunately the Mayor could neither go nor send someone to represent him, but he did record a message from the Square House for the occasion and after it was broadcast to the crowd an American vice-consul acted as proxy and lit the bonfire that blazes high on the shore every Fifth of November. In a letter on the handsome note paper of the Society, with a letter head showing a stunning blaze against a black sky, the Chairman of the Society sent clippings from the local paper describing the celebration and saying that the Mayor's broadcast was “played each evening at the local cinema” throughout the week. Also enclosed were a membership card and badge of the Society, “sent with the sincere hope that one day you may wear the latter at one of our future events.” It is foreseen that some year when the City Council meeting falls on Guy Fawkes Day an Acting Mayor will be found in the chair at the head of the table, for its legitimate occupant will be dancing gaily around that bonfire, complete with badge!

Through other clippings from the Sussex newspaper we were informed of two further American visits, one of the same year, when Mr. and Mrs. Ellis Knowles attended matins at St. Mary's and made the arrangement whereby a piece of stone flooring from that church, then under restoration, was sent across the sea to Christ's Church, and the visit to Rye in 1952 of Judge Roger Sherman and Mrs. Sherman when they were entertained at a banquet in the Mermaid Inn attended by twenty-four members of the Council and their wives. In October of the same year came a return call. Sir Neill Cooper-Key, M.P. and Mrs. Cooper-Key brought greetings and were officially welcomed at the Square House by the Mayor, members of the City Council, Judge Sherman and three former Mayors, Messrs. Beaty, Morehead and Frederick. After a mock-meeting they were taken to lunch at the Apawamis Club. We, too, in our democratic way, can

roll out the red carpet when we like.

It is not unfitting that this sketch of Rye in the last fifty years should close with a picture of the day whose events led up to its being written.

The 23rd of October, 1954, is a day to be remembered, for on that day Rye celebrated its incorporation as a *village* in October, 1904. Thirty-eight years from now those of us who are still around will be celebrating fifty years of Rye as a *city*. It will be almost 2000 A.D. and, dreadful to contemplate, the festivity will probably be an Atomic Age affair. Rye of 1954, no doubt, will look to these celebrants a little quaint, just as now the days and ways of 1904 seem to us to belong to a rather staid, quiet, horse-and-carriage way of life, which at times we mildly envy.

Be that as it may this Golden Anniversary Semi-centennial was to celebrate Rye's growth from a village into a city, twelve years in operation. It was our well-loved Mayor Hannan's idea and he carried it through with the competent help of Daniel E. Kelly, his committee chairman, who, in turn, was assisted by the heads of many city organizations.

Let it be said, first of all, that it was a glorious day of bright sunshine and brisk, clear air. Everyone knows what October weather in Rye is at its best and October had outdone itself for this occasion. One was glad to be alive, and when on top of this was heaped a parade with flags and bands — well, one's cup was running over. Those of us who went early to the High School stadium and sat waiting and visiting with neighbors — and everyone was a neighbor that day — looked out across the wide expanse of green toward the beautiful school and the church spires in the distance and realized afresh what a fair city we inherit. Also we looked about with a faint sense of surprise and wondered why the stand was not better filled, and then remembered that a good part of Rye was in the parade! And now music sounded in the distance and the cars with the dignitaries and their guests appeared, the reviewing stand filled and its occupants' eyes and ours turned toward the always thrilling and moving sight of the colors approaching. From then on — and it was a satisfyingly long parade — we were treated to a showing such as the citizen too rarely sees, a representation of all the various groups that make our city

function. There they came, the police and the firemen of whom Rye is so justly proud, resplendent in blue uniforms and bright buttons, their fiery red equipment shined up and blazing in the sunshine; the honest, solid-looking public works cars and trucks came next, rumbling ponderously along; then the American Legion post and the Civil Defense units with the Auxiliary Police and the Red Cross; and last, led by the Civil Air Patrol and the High School band came the bright-faced, eager boys and girls, the school children, the Junior Red Cross and the Scouts, and then all the array of the service clubs and other civic and social groups. Interspersed were the bands and some spectacular floats. We cannot enumerate them all or make any invidious distinctions, but a sigh of relief went up, we feel sure, when the judges for the day, five of Rye's former Mayors, awarded first prize to the Iwo Jima tableau, the Marines raising the flag on Mount Surabachi, which had so tugged at our heartstrings as it rolled past the stand.

We have been concealing until now the bitter dose of disappointment that we all had to swallow that day — the fact that we were attending a performance of Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark left out. The moving force behind this anniversary, the man whose idea it was in the first instance was not present — officially! Yet, after bitter medicine a patient is often given a taste of jelly or jam to help him forget it, and it is distinctly a pleasure to administer that second dose and to disclose that against doctor's orders Mayor Joseph A. Hannan rose from his hospital bed and came, unknown to many, to watch the parade from a car window.

Brief speeches and the awarding of prizes to the floats ended the day. Chairman Daniel E. Kelly, presiding, introduced Acting Mayor Hughes who welcomed the audience, and Corporation Counsel Sherman in his capacity as Village Historian made the principal address, a talk in reminiscent vein on "Fifty Years of Rye."

It seemed to those who watched it all that the crowd broke up slowly and reluctantly as though hating to have something rather precious come to an end. The something, when one came to analyze it, was a great, warm feeling of neighborliness. Everywhere you looked people were talking and smiling at each other. They looked happy and contented, as people in crowds all too seldom do. The general feeling seemed to be that Rye had made a proud showing and that

it was a good place to live. In what better frame of mind could one leave an anniversary gathering — or, for that matter — a book?

The book must end, but Rye faces forward. We sometimes hear people wondering what its future is to be. It will be, of course, what its people make it, the old residents and the newcomers working together. As of now it is a real *community*, with a hard core of kindly, generous, public-spirited citizens. No one knows what its evolution will be, but we trust it will neither stagnate nor go to the other extreme and reach out too eagerly for too much. We do know that it is growing in numbers slowly but steadily. There are almost thirteen thousand people here now and some think that we shall add another thousand by 1960. However, Rye is pretty well developed; there is no great amount of land left unused, and of one thing we can be reasonably sure. Unless there is some radical change in its present government and its planning set-up there is little danger that in the foreseeable future Rye will change much in character from the comfortable, close-knit, home-loving community that we know it to be and in which we are content to live.

When a "prospect" comes into a real estate office looking for a house he asks, no doubt, "What sort of a place is Rye, anyway?" We suppose that he is then informed about the fine schools, the churches, the train service, the attractive clubs, the beaches, the opportunities for social life, and so on. What a good idea it might be to have someone who would beckon him aside and say, "Let me tell you about the *people* of Rye, all the wise, the kind, the crotchety, generous, courageous, amusing individuals that go to make up our town."

If we were that person we should hardly know where to begin, but we should start off quite matter-of-factly by saying, "You know, of course, that we have artists and musicians (a few professionals and many amateurs), architects, photographers, writers, television and radio people, business executives, bankers, brokers, devoted physicians, teachers, and ministers; and that there are literally thousands of women who, in one person, combine the talents of wife, mother, cook, cleaning woman, family chauffeur and club

member. Yet you must realize that that list leaves out many others just as representative and just as important. We are thinking now of the quiet people who go about day after day doing some piece of work, simple enough in itself, but doing it so well, and so hating a sloppy job, that they are artists in the true sense of the word; of the clerks in the supermarkets who do not tell you merely what the bill adds up to, but check you out with a cheerful word and a smile; of the old carpenters who come to have a special flavor because they work in wood; and the Italian gardeners, old and wise; and the wonderful policemen who carefully watch little children across the street, and hold up important looking cars so that the infirm may cross in safety; and of the firemen who answer alarms so quickly, and once arrived take thought for you and your possessions beyond the call of duty; and the postmen who, handing you the mail, put the interesting looking letters on top; and the faithful, hard-working custodians who come to take personal pride in the buildings they care for.

"And do you know," we should go on, holding him even as the Ancient Mariner the Wedding Guest, "that there are people here whose acts refute the notion held by some that Americans are growing soft? For instance" — and then we should tell him about the time when a new minister was coming to a church whose coffers were not exactly brimming over, and the parsonage was badly out of repair, so the congregation as one man rolled up its sleeves and did it over completely, except plumbing and electricity, forty-nine people working fifteen hundred man-hours. And we might add that plenty of young couples in Rye who could not afford the high prices of painters and carpenters have done the same thing in their homes.

"Do you know," we should continue, "that you still see in the street men and women who have the real *country* look, not suburban at all, rural Vermont, rather? And there are many old people here, and some of them look as though life had passed them by, but when you draw them out you find that they have backgrounds and experiences you would never suspect. Contrariwise, you should see the throngs of children and young people on the street when school lets out in the afternoon. Eyes bright, unafraid, full of energy, ready for anything! Young voices sound everywhere and for a time the city takes on new life.

We should dwell also on the accessibility and courtesy

of our government officials and of how our citizens appreciate this, and of how they still come together in groups and talk things over with the city fathers when there are strains and stresses in civic matters, adding that while one is instinctively overawed by one of those imposing modern city halls that are merely a rabbit warren of offices, the old Square House actually seems to invite visitors.

By this time our stranger might well be wondering how he could escape from this enthusiast. We should let him go, but with one parting shot; "We forgot to mention that there are delightful people here who can believe six impossible things before breakfast; and others whose favorite author is E. B. White, and *that* ought to tell you something; and still others who derive more amusement from a page of Benchley or Don Marquis than from listening to the joke-masters on television; and fathers who are forced to read preposterous stories by Beatrix Potter and Ludwig Bemelmans to their children at bedtime — and find it no punishment, really. Oh, there are all sorts of people in Rye!"

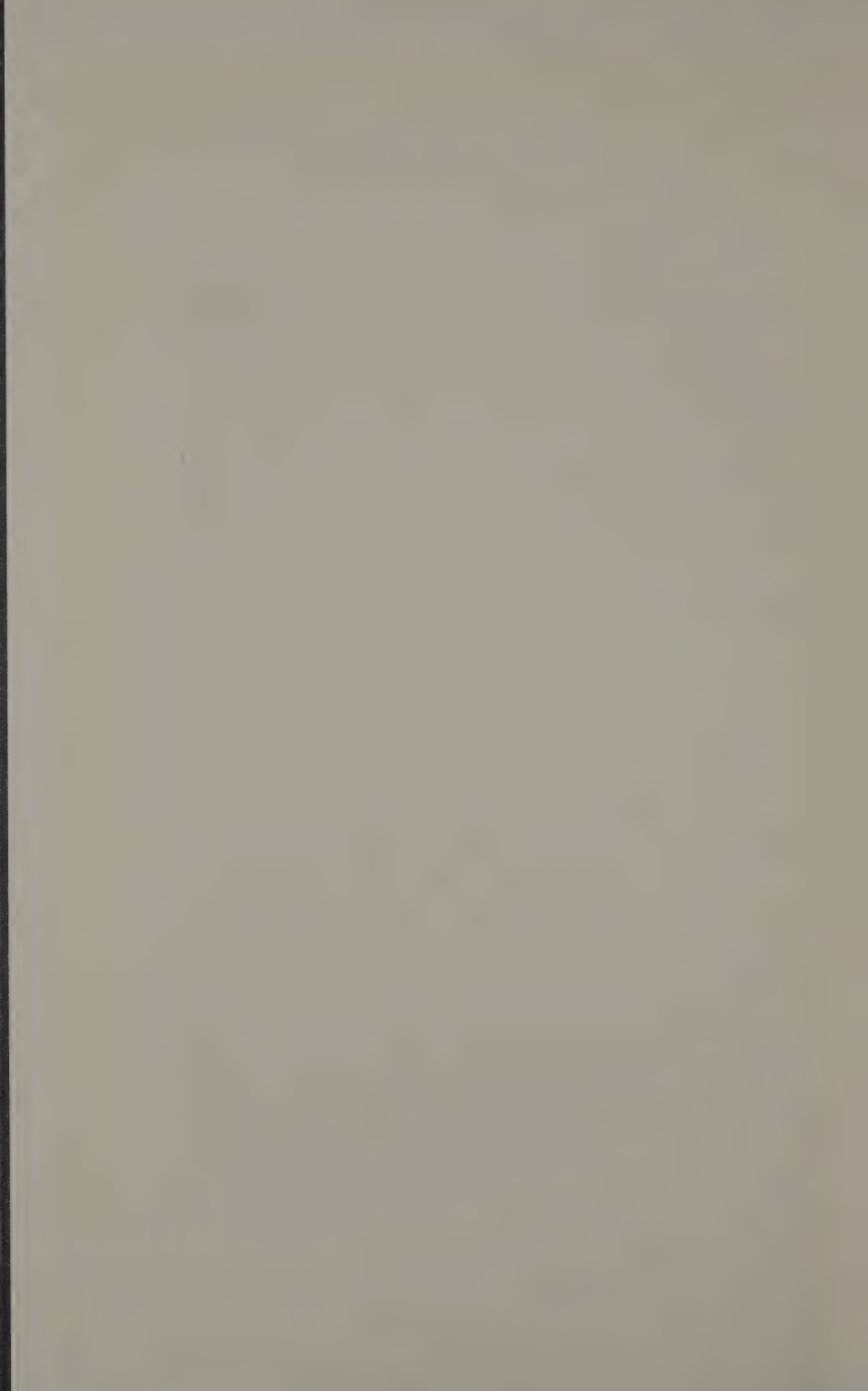
In one of her articles on Soviet Russia in the *Herald Tribune* not long ago Marguerite Higgins said that she had been reading about a couple who were criticized because, "in spite of the honor and trust given them by the award of membership in the Communist party," they had permitted their daughter to go to church. This action was deplored and the article recommended their expulsion from the party on the ground that they had obviously shown themselves to be a pair of *hardened idealists*." (Miss Higgins' italics.)

Thinking back over the fine, generous, public-spirited men and women who have lived here in the past and whose influence lives on after them, and then looking about at the men and women we know today as friends and neighbors, who by both precept and example are doing everything they know to make Rye a good place to live, if anyone asks us what kind of a town it is we shall say firmly, "Rye is a town of hardened idealists."



THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL PARADE
October 23, 1954.

Porto



APPENDIXES

Appendix I

PRESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGE OF RYE

1904-1941

*William H. Parsons	1904-1905
*Marselis C. Parsons	1905 (March 1-25)
*Charles Eldredge	1905-1906
*Justus A. B. Cowles	1906-1909
*Solomon M. Ireland	1910-1911
*Clarence Sackett	1911-1912
*Theodore Fremd	1913-1925
John M. Morehead	1926-1927

MAYORS OF THE VILLAGE OF RYE

John M. Morehead	1927-1930
*Archibald A. Forrest	1930 (February 20-April 7)
Livingston Platt	1930-1941

MAYORS OF THE CITY OF RYE

Livingston Platt	1942-1943
Julian B. Beaty	1943 (November-December)
Grenville S. Sewall	1944-1947
Karl Frederick	1948-1949
Joseph A. Hannan	1950-

*Deceased

FIFTY YEARS OF RYE

TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF RYE
and
COUNCILMEN OF THE CITY OF RYE
1904-1954

*William Porter Allen	1904-1910
*George D. Barron	1905-1906
*Daniel H. Beary	1905-1919
Julian B. Beaty	1929-1943
*William Billington	1926-1936
Henry Bird	1909-1910
Frank E. Bixby	1929-1933
Charles O. Brown	1937-1941
*Josiah W. Bulkley	1910-1924
*Thomas J. Byrnes, Jr.	1910-1929
Charles W. Costello	1933-1937
*Ralph L. Crow	1932-1936
*James F. Cushion	1905-1909
Alder Ellis	1921-1923
*Ernest W. Ellsworth	1920-1925
*Archibald A. Forrest	1924-1940
*Theodore Fremd	1909-1913
Frank E. Gernon	1936-1939
*Charles A. Gleason	1904-1909
**William H. Graham	1941-
*J. Henry Halsted	1923-1925
*James D. Halsted	1910-1922
**Robert P. Hughes	1936-
*Solomon M. Ireland	1911-1912
William F. Irwin	1943-1947
*Leonard Kennedy	1929-1932
George M. Langeloh	1937-1941
*C. Russell Lea	1948-1955
Frederick K. Lister	1940-1941
*Robert Mallory, Jr.	1924-1926
J. Motley Morehead	1925-1926
*Williamson Pell	1927-1929
Livingston Platt	1925-1929
Walter H. Powers	1918-1922
*Reginald W. Pressprich	1921-1922
Daniel B. Purdy	1922-1924
**Herbert S. Reid	1948-
**Edward Renz	1945-
*Clarence Sackett	1905-1911

APPENDIX I

Grenville S. Sewall	1940-1943
*Mortimer B. Slater	1913-1921
**William E. Snodgrass	1950-
*Edwin C. Thomas	1922-1936
*J. Howard Wainwright	1906-1910
Eugene H. B. Watson	1943-1947
*Howard E. White	1912-1918

*Deceased

**Present incumbent

After Rye became a city, Jan. 1, 1942, *Trustees* were designated officially as *Councilmen*.

THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN MILESTONES

In his annual report on village affairs in March, 1928, Mayor Morehead mentioned that during the previous year the old Franklin milestones set up in Rye in Revolutionary times had been recovered and reinstated as nearly as possible in their original positions. This was no small undertaking as not only had they been moved but some had been lost sight of and were discovered in odd places. One, the 26th, was found by George P. Putnam in a pile of refuse on his old property on the Post Road. He placed it in the foundation of his new house on Locust Avenue but when the search for the markers was instituted he, of course, removed it and presented it to the village. Another, the 29th, (and this did not belong in Rye) was found in the wall of a cellar window in the old Purdy house on Purchase Street.

The location of the markers now is as follows:—

24th mile . . . In the wall in front of the residence of Mrs. Walter B. Devereux, formerly the Jay mansion, on the east side of the Post Road.

25th mile . . . On the west side of the Post Road about 100 yards below the point where the Old Post Road comes in, on Osborn Home property.

26th mile . . . On the east side of the Post Road in the wall in front of Christ's Church.

The inscription on the milestones reads:— This is one of 230 markers erected on the Boston Post Road in 1763. Their locations were fixed by Benjamin Franklin, then Deputy Postmaster General, who for that purpose drove a

chaise with a distance recorder over the route. Restored to this, its original position, June 1st, 1927 by the Village of Rye. "Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set." (Proverbs XXII, verse 28).

THE MILTON CEMETERY

Since so little of the history of Rye is in permanent form it is of interest to note here that a unique and valuable contribution to it was made not long ago by Henry Bird of Milton Point. Entitled *The Milton Public Cemetery: A Compilation*, 1946, it consists of data taken from the existing gravestones in the old cemetery on Milton Road, the oldest of which bears the date 1722. It includes also a prefatory sketch by Mr. Bird giving the history of the cemetery and illustrated with a few pen and ink drawings of some of the stones.

The original typewritten copy of this work, bound up in book form, is held by the author, and a microfilm of it has been made and presented by him to the Rye Free Reading Room.

Appendix II

OFFICIALS, COMMITTEES AND BOARDS
CITY OF RYE

(As of October, 1954)

CITY COUNCIL

MAYOR

JOSEPH A. HANNAN

COUNCILMEN

WILLIAM H. GRAHAM

ROBERT P. HUGHES

C. RUSSELL LEA

HERBERT S. REID

EDWARD RENZ

WILLIAM E. SNODGRASS

SUPERVISOR

LESTER D. COOK

FIFTY YEARS OF RYE

William H. Selzer—*Comptroller*
R. Fred Talento—*City Clerk*
Raymond W. Murphy—*City Engineer*
Edward J. Langeloh—*Building Inspector*
Richard Barber—*City Judge*
Roger Sherman—*Corporation Counsel*
Robert J. Warren—*Police Chief*
Cornelius Falch—*Fire Chief*
Emil Palombo—*1st. Asst. Fire Chief*
Harold Balls—*2nd Asst. Fire Chief*

STANDING COMMITTEES

FINANCE

Robert P. Hughes
Chairman
William E. Snodgrass
C. Russell Lea

PUBLIC WORKS

William H. Graham
Chairman
William E. Snodgrass
Edward Renz

FIRE

Edward Renz
Chairman
Herbert S. Reid
C. Russell Lea

SANITATION

Herbert S. Reid
Chairman
William H. Graham
Edward Renz

POLICE

C. Russell Lea
Chairman
Robert P. Hughes
William H. Graham

ZONING & CITY PROPERTY

William E. Snodgrass
Chairman
Robert P. Hughes
Herbert S. Reid

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

TRUSTEES POLICE

PENSION FUND

Joseph A. Hannan
C. Russell Lea
Robert J. Warren

TRANSPORTATION

William E. Snodgrass
Robert P. Hughes
Edward Renz

PARKING AREA

Joseph A. Hannan
William H. Selzer
Roger Sherman
Robert P. Hughes
Raymond W. Murphy

ARCHITECTURAL BOARD OF REVIEW

Esmond Shaw, *Chairman*

Lester D. Cook

Charles C. Reilly

Vincent H. Rathgeb

J. William Lewis

Edward J. Langeloh, *Sec'y* (as Building Inspector)

EXAMINING BOARD OF PLUMBERS

John J. Bitz, *Chairman*

J. Edward Odell

George Harvey

Raymond W. Murphy) ex-officio members of Board

Edward J. Langeloh) by virtue of their City positions

PLANNING COMMISSION

Frederick P. Clark, *Chairman*

Jonathan F. Butler

Guthrie Shaw

Raymond W. Murphy

William E. Snodgrass

RECREATION COMMISSION

John J. Feeley, *Chairman*

Marshall Cornine

William F. Irwin

William H. Graham

Eleanor Keegan

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Allison Choate, *Chairman*

William Demorest

Henry F. G. Wey, Jr.

Richard H. McCann



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